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THEOLOGICAL TRACTS.

THEOLOGICAL TRACTS,

SELECTED AND ORIGINAL.

EDITED

BY JOHN BROWN, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY TO THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
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PREFATORY NOTE TO VOL. III.

THIS volume will be found, it is hoped, at least equally deserving as its two precursors of a kind reception from those for whose advantage it is primarily intended. The tracts are more numerous, and not less varied and important in their subjects, than those in the volumes formerly published. Six of them are original, and though not prepared for publication by the authors, are every way worthy of their high reputation. The reprint of Andrew Marvell's acute and witty Tract in defence of Howe,—a tract which though not inferior to any thing its distinguished author has written, has never been included in any collection of his works, and which, as only one copy of it is known to exist, was in great danger of being lost,—gives a peculiar value to the volume.

ERRATA.

Vol. i. page 237, second line, *for 1788 read 1778.*

241. last line, *for Bishops read Bishop.*

Vol. ii. page 5, eighth line from foot, *for Horne read Hurd.*

143, eighth line, *for hearkening read hankering.*

170, eighth line from foot, *for inconsistent read consistent.*

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PREFATORY NOTICE.

JOHN HOWE, one of England's first Theologians, was born May 17, 1630, at Loughborough, Leicestershire, of which place his father was minister. Being ejected from his living for Puritanism, the elder Howe sought a refuge in Ireland; but was soon, in consequence of the breaking out of the rebellion, obliged to return to his native country. His son was, at seventeen years of age, admitted as a sizer into Christ's College, Cambridge, where he became acquainted with Cudworth and More, with the latter of whom he formed an intimate friendship. He remained at Cambridge till 1648, when he took his degree of B.A.: after which he repaired to the Sister university and took the same degree there January 18, 1649. He obtained a fellowship in Magdalene College, and at the early age of twenty-two took the degree of M.A. He joined a small church under the pastoral care of Dr. Goodwin, the President of his College, and was soon after presbyterially ordained at Winwick, Mr. Herle, who succeeded Dr. Twisse in the chair of the Westminster Assembly, presiding on the occasion. About the year 1650 he settled as a minister at Great Torrington, in Devon, where he laboured most assiduously in all the departments of a Christian pastor's work. In the close of 1656 or the beginning of 1657, being occasionally in London, he attended divine service in the chapel of Whitehall. His appearance attracted Cromwell's attention. At the close of the service a message was sent Howe, informing him that the Protector wished to speak with him. The conversation led to a request to preach at Whitehall chapel next Lord's day. The request was respectfully declined, but Cromwell would take no denial, and the result was that, not without reluctance, Howe was induced to accept the proffered office of the Protector's domestic chaplain, and removed his family from Torrington to Whitehall. He retained this situation till the deposition of Richard Cromwell from the Protectorship, when he gladly returned to his beloved

people at Torrington, from whom he had been reluctantly separated. Immediately after the restoration an attempt was made to ruin him by a charge of having uttered seditious and even treasonable matter from the pulpit. After a double trial, the judge found "that the charge was wholly founded on a mistake," and cleared him. It was not long, however, when in consequence of the act of Uniformity, he, along with more than two thousand of his brethren, was deprived of his living on Bartholomew's day, August 24, 1662. But though Howe was an *ejected* minister he could not consent to be a *silenced* one—but availed himself of every opportunity of preaching in private houses those truths which he was no longer permitted to proclaim in public. In consequence of this he was soon brought into trouble. For several years he continued to lead the life of a fugitive and a wanderer. To add to his scanty means of subsistence probably he in 1668 published "The Blessedness of the Righteous" a practical treatise which has few equals—perhaps no superior. It met with the success it deserved, and likely led to his being invited to become domestic chaplain to Lord Massarene of Antrim Castle, Ireland—an offer which he gratefully embraced. He left England for that county early in 1671, and remained in Lord Massarene's family about five years, which probably were the happiest in his life. In 1675 he was invited to take charge of a Presbyterian congregation in London, which after mature deliberation he resolved to accept. Soon after his removal to London he published the first part of his great work, "The Living Temple," and in 1677 he gave to the world the ingenious and elaborate tract which holds the first place in this volume, "The reconcileableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men, with the wisdom and sincerity of his counsels, exhortations, and whatsoever other means he uses to prevent them" In 1680 he published his admirable "Letter out of the Country to a person of quality in the City, who took offence at the late sermon of Dr. Stillingfleet, Dean of St. Paul's, before the Lord Mayor." In 1682 he contributed to the continuation of Poole's Annotations—a short commentary on the three Epistles of John, and in 1683 was published his justly celebrated discourse on "Union among Protestants." It was during this year too that he wrote anonymously his exquisite letter of condolence and consolation to Rachel Lady Russell, on the death of her husband, who died a martyr to the

cause of liberty. In 1685 when the persecutions of the Nonconformists had reached their height, and the prospect of being permitted to prosecute his ministry most gloomy, he gladly accepted the invitation of Philip Lord Wharton to accompany him in his travels on the continent. In company with that nobleman he visited some of the most celebrated cities in Europe, and enjoyed literary intercourse with learned men of all parties. As there was no inducement for him to return home, after having spent a year in travel he settled at Utrecht and took a large house for the accommodation of English residents. While there he took part with some other Nonconformist ministers, who like himself had preferred exile in Holland to persecution at home, in performing the offices of public worship in the English church in that city, and assisted in their studies some young Englishmen attending the university and preparing for the ministry. Here he made the acquaintance of Dr. Burnet, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury, and had several interviews with the illustrious William Prince of Orange, afterwards King of England, who "ever after," says Calamy, "maintained a great respect for him." In 1687 when King James, for obvious reasons, abandoned every principle of his past policy, and published his "Declaration for Liberty of Conscience," Howe's congregation earnestly entreated him to avail himself of the declaration and resume his labours among them; and with this invitation he immediately complied. When the Prince of Orange in 1688 had arrived at St. James's Palace, Howe, at the head of a deputation of Nonconformist ministers, presented a congratulatory address. In 1689 he published "The case of the Protéstant Dissenters represented and argued," and on the passing of the act of toleration on the 24th May in that year, he gave to the world his admirable "Humble requests both to Conformists and Dissenters touching their temper and behaviour to each other upon the lately passed indulgence." He took an active part in endeavouring to unite the Presbyterians and Congregationalists in 1691, and was also involved in the controversies occasioned by the republication of Dr. Crisp's sermons. This occasioned the publication of his sublime discourses entitled "Carnality of Religious Contention," which certainly do, as his colleague Mr. Spademan says, "breathe a heavenly charity and concern for the Christian interest." The discussion of the Trinitarian question by Wallis, Sherlock, South,

and Cudworth, led to the publication of his "Calm and Sober Inquiry," followed by a "Postscript," in 1694. In 1697 he published his sublime discourse on "The Redeemer's dominion over the invisible world," with a consolatory letter, inferior only to that addressed to Lady Russell, to Sir Charles and Lady Hoghton, on the loss of their son, whose untimely death had occasioned it. In 1701-2 he took a part in the controversy with respect to "occasional conformity," and advocated with great power, and in a beautiful spirit, "True Christian Communion." In the last of those years he completed "The Living Temple," publishing the second part and republishing the first part. Towards the close of 1704 plain indications were given that the time was at hand when this great and good man must die. The earthly house of his tabernacle was very gently and gradually taken down. A few weeks before his death he sent to the press his discourse "On Patience in expectation of future blessedness," a virtue, alas, which few find it difficult to practise. Richard Cromwell visited him on his deathbed, and the "faithful chronicler," Calamy, tells us that "there was a great deal of serious discourse between them; tears were freely shed on both sides, and the parting was very solemn." He told his wife that "though he loved her as well as it was fit for one creature to love another; yet if it were put to his choice whether to die that moment—or to live for seven years to come, he would choose to die that moment." On his son, a physician, lancing his gangrened leg without apprising him of his intention, he asked what he was doing, adding, "I am not afraid of dying, but I am afraid of pain." His dying declaration was—"I expect salvation, not as a profitable servant, but as a pardoned sinner." He expired without a struggle on April 2d, 1705, having nearly finished his seventy-fifth year. Besides the works mentioned in this notice, Howe published a number of sermons, chiefly funeral, some of which are of transcendent excellence. Since his death many of his sermons have been published—in a state very different from that in which he would have given them to the world, but almost all of them distinctly marked by the hand of a master. The best account of Howe, and it would be difficult to overrate its merits, is "The Life and Character of John Howe, M.A., with an analysis of his writings, by Henry Rogers," 1836.

TO THE HON. ROBERT BOYLE.

SIR,

THE veneration I have long had for your name, could not permit me to apprehend less obligation than that of a law, in your recommending to me this subject. For within the whole compass of intellectual employment and affairs, none but who are so unhappy as not at all to know you, would dispute your right to prescribe, and give law. And taking a nearer view of the province you have assigned me, I must esteem it alike both disingenuous and undutiful, wholly to have refused it. For the less you could think it possible to me to perform in it, the more I might perceive of kindness allaying the authority of the imposition; and have the apprehension the more obvious to me that you rather designed in it mine own advantage, than that you reckoned the cause could receive any, by my undertaking it.

The doubt, I well know, was mentioned by you as other men's, and not your own; whose clear mind, and diligent inquiry, leave you little liable to be encumbered with greater difficulties. Wherefore that I so soon advert from you, and no more allow these papers to express any regard unto you, till the shutting of the discourse, is only a seeming disrespect or indecorum, put in the stead of a real one. For after you have given them the countenance, as to let it be understood that you gave the first rise and occasion to the business and design of them; I had little reason to slur that stamp put upon them, by adding to their (enough other) faults, that of making them guilty of so great a misdemeanour and impertinency, as to continue a discourse of this length, to one that hath so little leisure or occasion to attend to any thing that can be said by them.



GOD'S PRESCIENCE OF THE SINS OF MEN.

SECT. I. What there is of difficulty in this matter I cannot pretend to set down in those most apt expressions wherein it was represented to me, and must therefore endeavour to supply a bad memory out of a worse invention. So much appears very obvious, that ascribing to the ever blessed God, among the other attributes which we take to belong to an every way perfect Being, a knowledge so perfect as shall admit of no possible accession or increase, and consequently the prescience of all future events, as whereof we doubt him not to have the distinct knowledge when they shall have actually come to pass; since many of those events are the sinful actions or omissions of men, which he earnestly counsels and warns them against; this matter of doubt cannot but arise hereupon, viz., "How it can stand with the wisdom and sincerity which our own thoughts do by the earliest anticipation challenge to that ever happy Being, to use these (or any other means) with a visible design to prevent that, which in the mean time appears to that all-seeing eye sure to come to pass." So that, by this representation of the case, there seem to be committed together,—either, first, God's wisdom with this part of his knowledge, for we judge it not to consist with the wisdom of a man, to design and pursue an end, which he foreknows he shall never attain: or secondly, the same foreknowledge with his sincerity and uprightness, that he seems intent upon an end, which indeed he intends not. The matter then comes shortly to this sum. Either the holy God seriously intends the prevention of such foreseen sinful actions and omissions, or he

doth not intend it. If he do, his wisdom seems liable to be impleaded, as above. If he do not, his uprightness and truth.

My purpose is not, in treating of this affair, to move a dispute concerning the fitness of the words prescience or foreknowledge, or to trouble this discourse with notions I understand not, of the indivisibility and unsuccessiveness of eternal duration, whence it would be collected there can be no such thing as first or second, fore or after, knowledge in that duration; but be contented to speak as I can understand, and be understood—that is, to call that foreknowledge which is the knowledge of somewhat that as yet is not, but that shall sometime come to pass: for it were a mere piece of legerdemain, only to amuse inquirers whom one would pretend to satisfy; or to fly to a cloud for refuge from the force of an argument, and avoid an occurring difficulty by the present reliefless shift of involving oneself in greater. Nor shall I design to myself so large a field as a tractate concerning the Divine prescience, so as to be obliged to discourse particularly whatsoever may be thought to belong to that theological topic; but confine the discourse to my enjoined subject, and offer only such considerations as may some way tend to expedite or alleviate the present difficulty.

SECT. II. It were one of the greatest injuries to religion, a subversion indeed of its very foundations. and than by doing which, we could not more highly gratify atheistical minds, instead, and under pretence of ascribing perfections to the nature of God, to ascribe to it inconsistencies, or to give a self-repugnant notion of that adorable Being, the parts whereof should jostle and not accord with one another. And yet equal care is to be taken lest, while we endeavour to frame a consistent notion of God, we reject from it anything that is truly a perfection, and so give a maimed one; whereby we should undo our own design, and by our over-much caution to make our conception of him agree with itself, make it disagree to him: for to an absolutely perfect Being, no other can agree than that, which not only is not made up of contradictions; but which also comprehends in it all real perfections either explicitly,

or which leaves room for all, by not positively excluding any of them : which to do, and afterwards to assign that as the proper notion of God, were itself the greatest contradiction. We need, therefore, to be very wary, lest we pronounce too hastily concerning any thing which, to our most sedate thoughts, appears simply a perfection in itself, that it carries with it a repugnancy to somewhat else necessary to be ascribed to him.

We are first to suspect (as there is greatest cause) and inquire whether the ail be not wholly in our own minds; which in this and such like cases, we certainly shall, upon due reflection, find labouring under the natural defect of that incomprehensive narrowness that is, in some degree, unavoidably followed with confusion and indistinctness of thoughts; and may perhaps find cause to accuse them of the more culpable evils, both of slothfulness, that withholds them from doing what they can, and self-conceit, by which they imagine to themselves an ability of doing what they cannot. It cannot be unobserved by them that have made themselves any part of their own study, that it is very incident to our minds, to grasp at more than they can compass; and then, through their own scantiness, (like the little hand of a child,) to throw away one thing that hath pleased us, to make room for another, because we cannot comprehend both together. It is not strange, that our so straitly limited understandings should not be able to lodge commodiously the immense perfections of a deity; so as to allow them liberty to spread themselves in our thoughts in their entire proportions. And because we cannot, we complain, when we feel ourselves a little pinched that the things will not consist; when the matter is, that we have unduly crowded and huddled them up together, in our incomprehensive minds, that have not distinctly conceived them.

And though this consideration should not be used for the protection of an usurped liberty of fastening upon God, arbitrarily and at random, what we please; (as indeed what so gross absurdity might not any one give shelter to by such a misapplication of it?) we ought yet to think it seasonably applied, when we find ourselves urged with difficulties on one hand and the other; and apprehend it hard,

with clearness and satisfaction, to ascribe to God, what we also find it not easy not to ascribe. Nor would it be less unfit to apply it for the patronage of that slothfulness wherein our discouraged minds are sometimes too prone to indulge themselves. To which purpose I remember somewhat very apposite in Minucius Felix, that many, through the mere tediousness of finding out the truth, do rather, by a mean succumbency, yield to the first specious show of any opinion whatsoever, than be at the trouble, by a pertinacious diligence, of applying themselves to a thorough search. Though the comprehension of our minds be not infinite, it might be extended much further than usually it is, if we would allow ourselves with patient diligence to consider things at leisure, and so as gradually to stretch and enlarge our own understandings. Many things have carried the appearance of contradiction and inconsistency to the first view of our straitened minds, which afterwards we have, upon repeated consideration and endeavour, found room for, and been able to make fairly accord, and lodge together.

Especially we should take heed lest it be excluded by over-much conceitedness, and a self-arrogating pride, that disdains to be thought not able to see through every thing, by the first and slightest glance of a haughty eye; and peremptorily determines that to be unintelligible, that an arrogant, uninstructed mind hath only not humility enough to acknowledge difficult to be understood. Whence it is too possible some may be over-prone to detract from God what really belongs to him, lest any thing should seem detracted from themselves, and impute imperfection to him rather than confess their own; and may be so over-ascribing to themselves, as to reckon it a disparagement not to be endured, to seem a little puzzled for the present, to be put to pause, and draw breath awhile, and look into the matter again and again; which if their humility and patience would enable them to do, it is not likely that the Author of our faculties would be unassisting to them, in those our inquiries which concern our duty towards himself. For though in matters of mere speculation, we may be encountered with difficulties, whereof perhaps no mortal can ever be able to find out the solution, (which is no great prejudice, and may

be gainful and instructive to us,) yet as to what concerns the object of our religion, it is to be hoped we are not left in inextricable entanglements; nor should think we are till we have made our utmost trial; the design being not to gratify our curiosity, but to relieve ourselves of uncomfortable doubtfulness in the matter of our worship, and (in a dutiful zeal towards the blessed object thereof) to vindicate it against the cavils of ill-minded men.

SECT. III. But if the unsuccessfulness of often repeated endeavours make us despair of being able, with so full satisfaction, to reconcile some things which we have thought were to be attributed to God; it will be some relief to us, if we find the things about which the doubt lies, are not of the same order, nor such as with equal evidence and necessity are to be affirmed of him. And when we make a comparison, we may find ourselves at a certainty concerning those his attributes which most commonly, and at the first view, approve themselves to every man's understanding. Among which we little hesitate, (as we are most concerned not to do,) about those which carry with them the import of moral goodness; and which render the object of our religion, at once, both most venerable and lovely: for none do more naturally obtain for common notions concerning him; so as even to prevent ratiocination or argument, with whomsoever the apprehension of his existence hath place.

Every man's mind, it being once acknowledged that there is a God, refuses to conceive otherwise of him, than that he is holy, just, merciful, true, &c., and rejects with abhorrence the notion of an impure, unrighteous, cruel, deceitful Deity. As for those that, by a long train of our own more uncertain and lubricous reasonings, we endeavour to deduce, if we find ourselves constrained any where to admit a diffidence, it were rather to be placed here. For it is at first sight evident, since God is most certainly willing to be known of them that are sincerely willing to know him, that what is a natural impression, stamped by his own hand on every man's mind, hath more of absolute certainty, than what depends on metaphysical subtlety; whereof so very few are capable, and whereby diverse pretenders thereto,

do so frequently (and perhaps very dangerously) ensnare themselves. And it is of far greater importance, such a notion of God be entertained, as whereby he may be rendered amiable, and an inviting object of love, (the very life and soul of all religion,) than such as shall be the result, and entertainment, only of scholastic wit.

Yet also, since it is very manifest that man has now become a degenerate creature, and in an apostacy from God, he is very little to be trusted with the framing his own idea of him; being certainly most unapt to allow any thing a place in it, that would have an unfavourable aspect upon his vicious inclinations and his guilty state. And the contagion of man's sinfulness having spread itself as far as he hath propagated his own nature, so as no notion in his mind can be more common than the perversion and distemper of his mind itself; the possibility and danger is very obvious, of mistaking a dictate of depraved nature for an authentic common notion. And though these are not impossible to be distinguished, and in some cases very easy, as when men find it imposed unavoidably upon them, to apprehend and acknowledge some things which they are very unwilling should be true, (in which case their sentiments have the same right to be believed as the testimony of an enemy on the opposite party's behalf,) we have yet no reason to neglect any other means, whereby we may be more certainly directed how to conceive of God, or what we are to attribute to him, and what not.

SECT. IV. Nor can we be at a greater certainty, than in admitting such things to belong to the blessed God, as he plainly affirms of himself; or any way, by his word, evidently discovers to belong to him. For as none knows the things of man, but the spirit of a man that is in him, so the things of God are known to none but the Spirit of God.* Taking therefore his own word for our measure in the present case, (which I will suppose the reader not to think it unreasonable to appeal to; and what is here said, is intended only for those that have that estimate of the writings wont

* 1 Cor. ii. 11.

to go under that name,) what it says of him (much more what it proves) will no doubt be admitted for certain truth: though, if it say such things as, to us, seem not so manifestly to agree with one another, our endeavour must be the more earnest and solicitous (as also it ought to be the more modest) to discuss, and remove the ἐναντιοφάνεις or whatsoever semblance of disagreement. And whosoever concern themselves to peruse that venerable book, will find every where, on the one hand, proclaimed and magnified in it, (what our own minds cannot but have been prepossessed of,) the most exquisite wisdom of God, whereby he forms and contrives the methods of all his dispensations, and disposes them in the aptest subserviency to his own great and most important ends; that "all his ways are judgment,"* and that he "worketh all things according to the counsel of his will:"† in sum, that all wisdom is appropriated to him, that he is celebrated in the style of "God, only wise."‡ Nor are we therefore to think it strange, if, many times, we are not able to trace him out, or understand the reason of every thing he thinks fit to do; for the paths of the more perfect wisdom, must therefore be expected to be the more abtruse, and remoter from common apprehension.

How often do we find ourselves so far outgone by wise and designing men, as that we are sometimes constrained to confess and admire their great prudence and conduct (when they have effected their purposes) in those managements, which we have before beheld, either with silent ignorance, or perhaps, not without censure. How much less should the wisest of men regret it, to find all their conjectures exceeded by the infinite wisdom; in the contemplation whereof, we find the great apostle (notwithstanding the vast capacity of his divinely enlightened understanding) exclaiming in a transport, "O the depth!"§ And when our eyes tell us, from so manifest stupendous effects, how far we are exceeded by him in power, it were reasonable to expect that he should surpass us proportionably in the contrivances of his wisdom also. And whereas the conjunction

* Deut. xxxii. 4.

† Rom. xvi. ult.

‡ Eph. i. 11.

§ Rom. xi. 33.

is rare, among men, of deep political wisdom, with integrity and strict righteousness; this proceeds from the imperfection and insufficiency of the former in great part, that they know not how to compass their designs, unless often, by supplying their want of wisdom, out of the spoil and violation of their justice and honesty. Otherwise, these are things not altogether so out of credit in the world, but that men would rather accomplish their purposes by fair and unexceptionable means, if they could tell how; only the respect and deference they have for them is less, than what they bear to their own interests and ends.

But besides the natural, inflexible rectitude of the divine will, we are secured, from his all-sufficiency, that we shall never be fraudulently imposed upon by any of his declarations unto the children of men. For there is nothing to be gained by it: and we cannot conceive what inducement he should have, to make use of any so mean and pitiful shifts for the governing of his creatures, whom he spontaneously raised out of nothing, and hath so perfectly within his power. Unless we should be so most intolerably injurious to him, as to imagine a worse thing of him than we would of the worst of men, that he loved falsehood for its own sake; and that against his so constantly professed detestation of it, the declared repugnancy of it to his nature, and the even tenour of his word, (every where agreeing with itself herein,) so often describing him by that property, "God that cannot lie," and with the same positiveness, avowing his own uprightness, and requiring it, expressing his great love to it, and the high delight he takes to find it in his intelligent creatures. The righteous God loveth righteousness, and with his countenance doth he behold the upright.* Nor is his testimony the less to be regarded for that it is laudatory, and of himself. For we are to consider the prerogative of him that testifies, and that if he were not *ἀντόπιστος* he were not God. Besides that his giving us this or any representation of himself (to whom it were enough to enjoy his own perfections) is a vouchsafement, and done of mere grace and favour to us, that we may by

* Psalm xi. 17.

it be induced to place with satisfaction our unsuspecting trust and confidence in him; as also, that he says in all this, no other thing of himself, than what our own minds, considering him as God, must acknowledge most worthy of him, and agreeing to him with the most apparent necessity. This part, therefore, of the idea of God hath so firm a foundation, both in the natural complexion of our own minds, and the report which his word makes of him, that on this hand we are hemmed in as by a wall of adamant; and cannot have the thought of defending his prescience, by entrenching upon his wisdom and truth, without offering the highest violence both to him and ourselves.

SECT. V. On the other hand, also, as it cannot but seem to us a higher perfection to know all things at once, than gradually to arrive at the knowledge of one thing after another; and so proceed from the ignorance of some things to the knowledge of them; and that nothing is more certain, than that all possible perfection must agree to God; so we find his own word asserting to him that most perfect knowledge which seems to exclude the possibility of increase; or that anything should succeed into his knowledge. For how plainly is it affirmed of him that he knows all things. And even concerning such future things as about which our present inquiry is conversant, the affirmation is express and positive: "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done."* Nor is the affirmation naked and unfortified. For in the same sacred records we have the same thing both affirmed and proved; inasmuch as we find, in a great part thereof, are contained things foretold by most express prophecy, unto which the events recorded in other parts (and many of them in other unquestioned writings besides) have so punctually corresponded, as to leave no place for doubt or cavil. Instances are so plain and well known that they need not be mentioned. And surely what was so expressly foretold could not but have been foreknown. It seems then an attempt

* Isa. xlv. 9, 10, with chap. xli. 22, 23.

also equally hopeless and unrelieving, as it were adventurous and bold, to offer at the protection of his wisdom and sincerity, by assaulting his prescience or certain foreknowledge of whatsoever shall come to pass. And that their defence is not to be attempted this way, will further most evidently appear from hence, that it is not impossible to assign particular instances of some or other most confessedly wicked actions; against which God had directed those ordinary means of counselling and dehorting men, and which yet it is most certain he did foreknow they would do. As, though it was so punctually determined even to a day,* and was (though not so punctually†) foretold unto Abraham, how long, from that time, his seed should be strangers in a land that was not theirs; yet how frequent are the counsels and warnings sent to Pharaoh to dismiss them sooner; yea, how often are Moses and Aaron directed to claim their liberty, and exhort Pharaoh to let them go, and at the same time told he should not hearken to them.‡ Nor indeed is it more seldom said that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, lest he should. Though it may be a doubt whether those passages be truly translated; for the gentler meaning of the Hebrew idiom being well known, it would seem more agreeable to the text, to have expressed only the intended sense, than to have strained a word to the very utmost of its literal import, and manifestly beyond what was intended. After the like manner is the prophet Ezekiel sent to the revolted Israelites, and directed to speak to them with God's own words, the sum and purport whereof was to warn and dehort them from their wicked ways, lest they should die; when as yet it is plainly told him, "but the house of Israel will not hearken to thee, for they will not hearken to me."§ Unto which same purpose it is more pertinent than necessary to be added, that our Saviour's own plain assertions that he was the Son of God, the many miracles by which he confirmed it, and his frequent exhortations to the Jews to believe in him thereupon, had a manifest tendency to make him be known and believed to be so, and consequently to prevent

* Exod. xi. 41.

† Exod. iv. &c.

‡ Gen. xv. 3.

§ Ezek. iii. 7.

that most horrid act of his crucifixion; for it is said, and the matter speaks itself, that "if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory:"* notwithstanding that it was a thing "which God's hand and counsel had determined before to be done."† That is, foreseeing wicked hands would be prompted and ready for this tragic enterprise, his sovereign power and wise counsel concurred with his foreknowledge so only, and not with less latitude, to define or determine the bounds and limits of that malignity, than to let it proceed unto this execution; and to deliver him up (not by any formal resignation or surrender, as we well know, but permitting him) thereunto. Though the same phrase of delivering him hath, elsewhere, another notion, of assigning or appointing him to be a propitiation for the sins of men, by dying; which was done by mutual agreement between both the parties, him that was to propitiate and him who was to be propitiated. In which respect our Saviour is also said to have given himself for the same purpose;‡ which purpose it was determined not to hinder prepared hands to execute in this way.

Now if it did appear but in one single instance only, that the blessed God did foreknow and dehort from the same act, it will be plainly consequent, that his warnings and dehortations from wicked actions in the general, can with no pretence be alleged as a proof against his universal prescience. For if the argument he dehorted from the doing such an action, therefore he did not foreknow it, would be able to conclude any thing, it must be of sufficient force to conclude universally; which it cannot do, if but a single instance can be given, wherein it is apparent he did both dehort and foreknow. It can only pretend to raise the doubt which we have in hand to discuss, how fitly, and with what wisdom and sincerity, he can be understood to interpose his counsels and monitions in such a case.

SECT. VI. Wherefore nothing remains but to consider how these may be reconciled, and made appear to be no way inconsistent with one another. Nor are we to apprehend herein so great a difficulty, as it were to reconcile his irre-

* 1 Cor. ii. 8.

† Acts iv. 28.

‡ Tit. ii. 14.

sistible predeterminative concurrence to all actions of the creature, even those that are in themselves most malignantly wicked, with the wisdom and righteousness of his laws against them, and severest punishments of them according to those laws. Which sentiments must, I conceive, to any impartial understanding, leave it no way sufficiently explicable, how the influence and concurrence, the holy God hath to the worst of actions, is to be distinguished from that which he affords to the best; wherein such inherently evil actions are less to be imputed to him who forbids them, than to the malicious tempter who prompts to them, or the actor that does them; or wherein not a great deal more; and leave it undeniable, that the matter of all his laws, in reference to all such actions that ever have been done in the world, was a simple and most natural impossibility. Nothing being more apparently so, than either not to do an action whereto the agent is determined by an infinite power; or to separate the malignity thereof from an intrinsically evil action; and that this natural impossibility of not sinning was the ineluctable fate of his (at first) innocent creatures: who also (as the case is to be conceived of with the angels that kept not their first station) must be understood irreversibly condemned to the suffering of eternal punishment, for the doing of what it was (upon these terms) so absolutely impossible to them to avoid.

SECT. VII. This too hard province the present design pretends not to intermeddle in, as being neither apprehended manageable, for those briefly mentioned considerations, and many more that are wont to be insisted on in this argument: nor indeed at all necessary. For though many considerations have been, with great subtlety, alleged and urged to this purpose, by former and some modern writers, (which it is beside the design of these papers severally to discuss,) these two which seem the most importunate and enforcing, will, I conceive, be found of little force; and then the less strength which is in others will be nothing formidable: viz. (1.) that it necessarily belongs to the original and fountain Being, to be the first cause of whatsoever being; and consequently that what there is of positive being in any the most wicked action, must principally owe itself to the determinative pro-

ductive influence of this first and sovereign cause; otherwise it would seem there were some being that were neither *primum* nor *a primo*. And again, (which we are more concerned to consider, because it more concerns our present subject,) (2.) that it were otherwise impossible God should foreknow the sinful actions of men, (many whereof, as hath been observed, he hath foretold,) if their futurition were a mere contingency, and depended on the uncertain will of the subordinate agent, not determined by the supreme.

But neither of these seem able to infer the dismal conclusion of God's concurring by a determinative influence unto wicked actions. Not the former; for it may well be thought sufficiently to salve the rights and privileges of the first cause, to assert that no action can be done but by a power derived from it; which in reference to forbidden actions, intelligent creatures may use or not use as they please, without over-asserting, that they must be irresistibly determined also, even to the worst of actions done by them. Besides that it seems infinitely to detract from the perfection of the ever-blessed God, to affirm he was not able to make a creature, of such a nature, as, being continually sustained by him, and supplied with power every moment suitable to its nature, should be capable of acting unless whatsoever he thus enables, he determine (that is, for it can mean no less thing, impel) it to do also. And except it were affirmed impossible to God to have made such a creature, (that is, that it implied a contradiction, which certainly can never be proved,) there is no imaginable pretence why it should not be admitted he hath done it; rather than so fatally expose the wisdom, goodness, and righteousness of God, by supposing him to have made laws for his reasonable creatures, impossible, through his own irresistible counter-action, to be observed; and afterwards to express himself displeased, and adjudge his creatures to eternal punishments, for not observing them.

I am not altogether ignorant what attempts have been made to prove it impossible, nor again, what hath been done to manifest the vanity of those attempts. But I must confess a greater disposition to wonder, that ever such a thing should be disputed, than dispute so plain a case; and that

a matter whereupon all moral government depends, both human and divine, should not have been determined at the first sight. It is not hard for a good wit to have somewhat to say for any thing; but to dispute against the common sense of mankind, we know beforehand, is but to trifle: as the essay to prove the impossibility of local motion. The notion of the goodness and righteousness of God, methinks, should stick so close to our minds, and create such a sense in our souls, as should be infinitely dearer to us than all our senses and powers; and that we should rather choose to have our sight, hearing, and motive-power, or what not besides disputed, or even torn away from us, than ever suffer ourselves to be disputed into a belief that the holy and good God should irresistibly determine the wills of men to, and punish, the same thing. Nor is it difficult to urge more puzzling sophisms against the former, than for this latter. But the efforts of a sophistical wit against sense, and more against the sense of our souls, and most of all against the entire sum and substance of all morality and religion, at once, are but like the attempt to batter a wall of brass with straws and feathers. Nor is the assault, on this part, more feeble and impotent, than the defence is wont to be of the other. For I would appeal to the quick refined sense of any sober and pious mind, after serious, inward consultation with itself; being closely urged with the horror of so black a conception of God, that he should be supposed irresistibly to determine the will of a man to the hatred of his own most blessed self, and then to exact severest punishments for the offence done; what relief it would now be to it, to be only taught to reply, that man is under the law, and God above it—a defence that doubles the force of the assault. What! that God should make a law, and necessitate the violation of it! and yet also punish that violation! And this be thought a sufficient salvo, that himself is not subject to any law! Will a quick-scented, tender spirit, wounded by so unsufferable indignity offered to the holy God, be any whit eased or relieved, by the thin sophistry of only a collusive ambiguity in the word law? which sometimes signifies the declared pleasure of a ruler to a subject; in which sense any eye can see God can be under no law, having no superior; but not

seldom, also, an habitual fixed principle and rule of acting after one steady tenor: in which sense how manifest is it, that the perfect rectitude of God's own holy gracious nature is an eternal law to him, infinitely more stable and immutable than the ordinances of day and night! Or what relief is there in that dream of the supposed possibility of God's making a reasonable creature with an innocent aversion to himself? For what can be supposed more repugnant, or what more impertinent? If innocent, how were it punishable? A law already made in the case, how can it be innocent?

But whatsoever strength there may be in arguments and replies, to and fro, in this matter; that which hath too apparently had greatest actual efficacy, with many, hath been the authority and name of this or that man of reputation, and the force of that art of imputing a doctrine, already under a prejudicial doom, to some or other ill-reputed former writer. I profess not to be skilled in the use of that sort of weapons. And what reputation ought to be of so great value with us, as that of God and religion? Though if one would take that invidious course, it were easy to evince, that such a predeterminate influx to the production of all whatsoever actions, is the dearly espoused notion of one, of as deservedly an ill character, as ever had the name of a Christian writer:* and whether he would not take that name for a dishonour to him, I pretend not to know. But let us take this sober account of the present case, that in this temporary state of trial, the efficacious grace of God is necessary to actions sincerely good and holy; which therefore all ought undespairingly to seek and pray for; but that in reference to other actions, he doth only supply men with such a power, as whereby they are enabled, either to act, or, in many instances, (and especially when they attempt any thing that is evil,) to suspend their own action. And surely it carries so unexceptionable a face and aspect with it, that no man that is himself sober, will think the worst name, of whosoever shall have said the same thing, were a prejudice to it; or should more oblige him to reject it, than we would think ourselves obliged to throw away gold, or diamonds, because

* Hobbes.

an impure hand hath touched them; or to deny Christ, because the devils confessed him. Though also, if any should impute the so stating of this matter to any author, that hath been wont to go under an ill name and character, in the Christian church; there were a great oversight committed; to say no harder thing of it. For the writers whose names would be supposed a prejudice, have neither said the same thing, nor with the same design. They would have this indetermination of the power afforded to the creature, to be so universal as to extend equally to evil actions and to good; and have asserted it with a manifest design to exclude efficacious grace, in reference to the best actions. Whereas this account would make it not of so large extent: (as it were very unreasonable any should:) for though it may well be supposed extendible to many actions, besides those that are intrinsically evil, or to any that are not spiritually good, yet nothing enforces (nor can it be admitted) that it should actually and always extend so far. For who can doubt but God can overrule the inclinations and actions of his creature, when he pleases; and, as shall best consist with his wisdom, and the purity of his nature, either lay on or take off his determining hand. Nor is it here asserted with any other design, than to exempt the blessed God, as far as is possible, from a participation in the evil actions of his creatures; in the meantime entitling him most entirely to those that are sincerely good: though it must be left imputable to men themselves (it being through their own great default) if they have not the grace which might effectually enable them to do such also. And as for the latter: this supposed indetermination of the human will, in reference, especially, to wicked actions, is far from being capable of inferring, that God cannot therefore foreknow them; or any thing more, than that we are left ignorant of the way, how he foreknows them. And how small is the inconvenience of acknowledging that, yea, and how manifest the absurdity of not acknowledging the like, in many cases! since nothing is more certain, than that God doth many things besides, whereof the manner how he does them, we can neither explicate nor understand! For neither is it difficult to assign instances more than enough of actions done by ourselves of the manner

whereof we can give no distinct account, as those of vision, intellection, with sundry others.

Some have been at great pains, we well know, to explain the manner of God's foreknowledge of these futurities, otherwise than by laying the foundation thereof in his supposed efficacious will or decree of them. They that can satisfy themselves with what Thomas [Aquinas] and Scotus have attempted, and the followers of them both—that can understand what it is, with the one, for all things to be eternally present to the Divine intellect in *esse reali*, and not understand by it, the world to have been eternal; or, what with the other, that they be all present only in *esse representativo*, and not understand by it, barely that they are all known, and no more, (which seems like the explication of the word invasion by invasion,) let them enjoy their own satisfaction. For my own part, I can more easily be satisfied to be ignorant of the *modus* or medium of his knowledge, while I am sure of the thing; and I know not why any sober-minded man might not be so too; while we must all be content to be ignorant of the manner, yea, and nature too, of a thousand things besides, when that such things there are, we have no doubt; and when there are few things, about which we can, with less disadvantage, suffer our being ignorant, or with less disreputation profess to be so. It cannot therefore be so affrightful a thing, to suppose God's foreknowledge of the most contingent future actions, well to consist with our ignorance how he foreknows them, as that we should think it necessary to overturn and mingle heaven and earth, rather than admit it.

SECT. VIII. Wherefore waving that unfeasible, unnecessary, and unenjoined task, of defending God's predeterminative concurrence unto sinful actions; our encounter must only be of the more superable difficulty, to reconcile his prescience of them with his provisions against them, i. e. how fitly the wise and holy God can have interposed his precautions and dissuasions, in their own nature, aptly tending to withhold and divert men from those evil actions, which he yet foresees they will do. And it is, in the first place, evident, there can be no pretence to allege that there is any such repugnancy

in the matter, as shall amount to a contradiction, so much as virtual, or which the things signified, on the one part and the other, can be understood any way to import. That indeed there should be a direct and explicit contradiction between foreknowing and dehorting, we may, at first sight, perceive the terms cannot admit; for there is nothing enunciated (affirmed or denied) in either. But let the sense of both be resolved into propositions, capable of being confronted to one another, and all that can be made of the former will only come to this, "You will do such a thing," and of the latter, no more but this, "You ought not to do it:" these are at as great distance, as can be imagined, from grating upon, or jarring with, one another. And wherein is the indecorum of it, that both these *effata* should proceed from the same mouth, viz., of a governor, or one that hath authority over others.

We will, for discourse sake, suppose a prince endowed with the gift or spirit of prophecy. This most will acknowledge a great perfection, added to whatsoever other his accomplishments. And suppose we this his prophetic ability so large, as to extend to most events that shall fall out within his dominions. Is it hereby become unfit for him to govern his subjects by laws, or any way admonish them of their duty? Hath this perfection so much diminished him as to depose him from his government? It is not, indeed, to be dissembled, that it were a difficulty to determine, whether such foresight were, for himself, better or worse. Boundless knowledge seems only in a fit conjunction with as unbounded power. But it is altogether unimaginable that it should destroy his relation to his subjects: as what of it were left, if it should despoil him of his legislative power, and capacity of governing according to laws made by it? And to bring back the matter to the supreme Ruler: let it for the present be supposed only, that the blessed God hath, belonging to his nature, the universal prescience whereof we are discoursing; we will, surely, upon that supposition, acknowledge it to belong to him as a perfection. And were it reasonable to affirm that by a perfection he is disabled for government; or were it a good consequence, 'He foreknows all things, he is therefore unfit to govern the world?'

SECT. IX. And, that we may consider the matter more narrowly, would the supposition of such foreknowledge in God, make that cease to be man's duty which had otherwise been so, and take away the differences of good and evil? Would it nullify the obligation of God's law, and make man's own inclination his only rule? or, if it be said, because it is foreknown man will do such a thing, therefore he may, where is the connexion? For what influence can foreknowledge have, to alter or affect any way, either the nature of the thing foreknown, or the temper of the person that shall do it; any more than the present knowledge of the same thing, now in doing? which knowledge none would deny to God; and which, when it occurs to a man, is no more understood to make an evil action innocent, than the action makes the eye guilty, of him that beholds it only and detests it at once. Surely what is, in its own nature, whether good or evil, can never not be so, be it foreknown or not foreknown.

But if what was otherwise man's duty, be still his duty, what can make it unfit that it be declared, and made known to him to be so? and how is that otherwise to be done, than by these disputed means? yea (for this is the case) what can make it less fit, than it would be that God should cease to rule over the world; and quit the right of his government to his revolted creatures, upon no other reason than only that he foresees they have a mind to invade it? It may now perhaps be said, all this reasoning tends indeed to establish the contrary assertion, that notwithstanding God do foreknow man's sin, it is however necessary he forewarn him of it—but it answers not the objected difficulty, viz., how reasonably any such means are used for an unattainable end; as it is manifest, the end, man's obedience, cannot be attained when it is foreknown he will not obey.

SECT. X. It may here, before we proceed further, not be unseasonable to consider, (a matter, as is known, wont to be much vexed in the schools,) how God may be said to act for any end at all. And it appears very certain, that he who is so every way absolutely perfect and happy, cannot be thought to intend and pursue an end, after the same manner as we are wont to do. We being conscious to ourselves of indi-

gency, or, at the best, of obligation to the author of our beings, are wont to design this or that end for the relieving of ourselves, or the approving ourselves to him. And, our satisfaction depending upon the attainment of it, we solicitously deliberate about the fittest means to attain it; and are tossed with various passions of desire, and hope, and fear, and joy, and grief, according as the end is apprehended more or less excellent, or likely to be attained; varying often our course upon new emergencies, as this or that may probably promote or hinder the success of our pursuit. In short, we pursue ends, as being both impatient of disappointment, and uncertain of their attainment.

The blessed God, being indigent of nothing, nor under obligation to any one, cannot be supposed to propound an end to himself as that whereupon his satisfaction depends, which were inconsistent with his already complete felicity, and would argue him but potentially happy; but acting always from an immense self-sufficient fulness of life, and of all perfections, doth ever satisfy himself in himself, and take highest complacency in the perfect goodness, congruity, and rectitude of his own most holy will and way. And again, as he doth not seek a yet unattained satisfaction, in any end he can be supposed to propound to himself; so nor can he be thought to deliberate, as we are wont to do, concerning the means of effecting any. For deliberation would imply doubtfulness and uncertainty, which his absolute perfection cannot admit, nor doth need; the whole frame and compass of things intended by him, in their distinct references and tendencies, being, at once, present to his all-comprehending view; so that there can be no place for any intermediate knowledge with him, or for any new resolves thereupon. "Known to the Lord are all his works from the beginning of the world."*

SECT. XI. This being premised; it is now further to be considered, that howsoever one end oftentimes is not attained, unto which the publicly extant declarations of the divine will have a visible aptitude, viz. the obedient compliance of men

* Acts xv. 18.

with them; another more noble end was, however, attainable, not unbecoming the designment of the divine wisdom, and which it was every way most worthy of God to be more principally intent upon. It is fit the mention of this be prefaced with an obvious remark;—that the misapprehension of the state of things between God and man doth, in great part, owe itself to our aptness to compare unduly the divine government with that of secular rulers; and our expectation to find them in all things agreeing with each other. Whereas there cannot but be a vast difference between the constitution and end of God's government over his creatures, and more especially mankind, and that of man over his fellow-creatures of the same kind. The government of secular human rulers can never be, in the constitution of it, altogether absolute, nor ought, in the design of it, primarily to intend the personal advantage of the ruler himself, who as much depends upon his subjects, and hath (at least) as great need of them, as they can be understood to have of him. But as to the blessed God the matter is apparent, and hath its own triumphant evidence, that since he is the original and root of all being, that all things are mere dependencies upon his absolute pleasure, and entirely of him, and by him, all ought to be to him, that he alone might have the glory.*

Wherefore, it must be asserted, and cannot fail of obtaining to be acknowledged, by every impartial and sober considerer of things, that there is a much more noble and important end, that all God's public edicts and declarations to men, (the instruments of his government over them,) do more principally aim at, than their advantage, viz. the dignity and decorum of his government itself; and that he may be found in every thing to have done as became him, and was most worthy of himself. And what could be more so, than that he should testify the aversion of his own pure and holy nature, to whatsoever was unholy and impure, his love of righteousness and complacency to be imitated herein, together with his steady, gracious propension to receive all them into the communion of his own felicity or blessedness (for the Redeemer's sake) who should herein comply with him?

* Rom. ii.

Nor are we to understand that he herein so designs the reputation of his government, as men are often wont to do things out of design for their interest in that kind, that are, otherwise, against their overruled inclination. But we are to account these his declarations (although they are acts of an intelligent agent, and the products of wisdom and counsel, yet also) the spontaneous emanations of his own holy and gracious nature, such as wherein he most fully agrees, and consents with himself. And is it now to be expected, that because he foresees men will be wicked, and do what shall be unworthy of them, he must therefore lay aside his nature, and omit to do what shall be worthy of himself?

SECT. XII. And hereupon it may be expected, the more ingenuous and candid will allow themselves to think the matter tolerably clear, in reference to the former part of the proposed difficulty; i. e. will apprehend this way of dealing with men not imprudent, or inconsistent with the divine wisdom, since, though one end, in a great part, fail, yet another, more valuable, is attained. But yet, as to the latter part, the difficulty may still urge, viz. how it can stand with sincerity; whereas that end also which fails, seems to have been most directly intended, that the blessed God should seem so earnestly intent upon it: since it is hardly conceivable, that the same thing should be, at once, seriously intended as an end, and yet, at the same time, give the eye, which seems to design it, no other prospect than of a thing never to be brought to pass.

Wherefore we are next to consider, that we may proceed gradually, and not omit to say what is in itself considerable; though it is not all (which cannot be said at once) that is to be said;—that the public declarations of the divine will, touching man's duty, do attain that very end, his obedient compliance therewith, in great part, and as to many (although it be foreknown they will prove ineffectual with the most) are the no less successful, than the apt means of attaining it. Nor, certainly, if it were foreknown the world would be so divided, as that some would obey, and others not obey, was it therefore the fittest course, that these two sorts should, by some extraordinary act of providence, be carefully severed

from each other; and those be dealt withal apart from the rest. But rather, that the divine edicts should be of a universal tenor, and be directed to all as they are; the matter of them being of universal concernment, and equally suitable to the common case of all men.

SECT. XIII. Neither yet was it necessary, that effectual care should be taken, they should actually reach all, and be applied to every individual person. Since it is apparently to be resolved into the wickedness of the world that they do not so, and that there is not a universal diffusion of the gospel into every part. For it being evident to any one's reflection, that men are in a state of apostacy and defection from their Maker and common Lord, and therefore subject to his displeasure; whereas the merciful God hath done his own part, and so much beyond what was to be expected from him; issued out his proclamations of peace and pardon, upon so easy and indulgent terms, as are expressed in his gospel; if, hereupon, men also did their part, behaved themselves suitably to the exigency of their case, and as did become reasonable creatures, fallen under the displeasure of their Maker, (whereof their common condition affords so innumerable, so pregnant proofs,) the gospel, wheresoever it should arrive, would have been entertained with so great a transport of joy, and so ready and universal acceptance, as very soon to have made a great noise in the world; and being found to be of a universal tenor and concernment, and that what it says to one nation, it equally says the same to every one; it could not but be, that messengers would interchangeably have run from nation to nation; some to communicate, others to inquire after, those strange tidings of great joy unto all people, lately sent from heaven, concerning the Emmanuel, God with us—God, again upon his return to man, and now in Christ reconciling the world to himself. And thus how easily, and even naturally, would the gospel soon have spread itself through the world! especially the merciful God having so provided, that there should be an office constituted, and set up; a sort of men, whose whole business it should be, to propagate and publish those happy tidings. But that men should so indulge their sensual,

terrene, inclination, as not at all to use their understandings and considering power, about other matters than only what are within the sight of their eye, when by so easy and quick a turn of thoughts they might feel and find out who made them, and was the original of their life and being, and that things are not right and as they should be, between him and them; and so by what is within the compass of natural revelation, be prepared for what is supernatural:—and not that only, but that to that stupidity, by which they are unapt to inquire after and receive, they should add that obstinate malignity by which they are apt to reject and oppose the merciful discoveries and overtures of their offended, reconcileable Creator and Lord, —how manifestly doth this devolve the whole business of the little, slow progress of the gospel in the world, upon themselves only! As suppose we a prince of the greatest clemency, benignity, and goodness, from whom a whole country of his subjects have made a most causeless defection; hereupon to send the whole body of the rebels a gracious proclamation of free pardon upon their return to their allegiance and duty; and it only from hence comes to pass, that every individual person of them distinctly understands not what the message from their prince did import; because, they that heard it would not, many of them, allow themselves to consider and regard it; and others of them, with spiteful violence, fell upon the heralds, barbarously butchering some of them, and ignominiously repulsing the rest: who would not say, that prince had fully done his part, and acquitted himself answerably to the best character, though he should send to the rebels no further overtures? Much more, if through a long tract of time, he continue the same amicable endeavours for their reduction, notwithstanding the constant experience of some ill success; who would not cast the whole business of the continued ill understanding, between him and the revolvers, upon themselves? and reckon it impossible any should be ignorant of his kind and benign inclinations and intentions, if an implacable enmity, and disaffection to him and his government, were not their common temper?

Though so infinitely do the mercies of God exceed those of the most merciful prince on earth, as well as his knowledge and power; that wheresoever there are any exempt cases, we

must conceive him equally able and inclined to consider them distinctly. And so vastly different may we well suppose the degrees of happiness and misery to be, in the other world; as that there may be latitude enough, of punishing and rewarding men, proportionably to the degrees of light they have had, and the more or less malignity, or propension to reconciliation, was found with them thereupon.

SECT. XIV. Nor again was it at all incongruous, or unbecoming, that the blessed God, this being the common temper and disposition of all men, to reject his gracious tenders, should provide, by some extraordinary means, that they might not be finally rejected by all. For what can be more appropriate to sovereignty (even where it is infinitely less absolute) than arbitrarily to design the objects of special favour? Who blames a prince, for placing special marks of his royal bounty, or clemency, here and there as he thinks fit? or that he hath some peculiar favourites, with whom he familiarly converses, whom he hath won, by some or other not common inducements, and assured their loyal affection; though there be thousands of persons in his dominions besides, of as good parts, dispositions, and deserts as they? It belongs to sovereignty, only so to be favourable to some, as, in the mean time, to be just towards all. Yea, and it must be acknowledged, such are the dispensations of the holy God towards the whole community of mankind, as import not only strict righteousness, but great clemency and mercy also. Though they might easily understand themselves to be offenders, and liable to the severities of his justice, they are spared by his patience, sustained by his bounty, protected by his power; their lives and properties are fenced by his own laws. And whereas they are become very dangerous enemies to one another; and each one his own greatest enemy; it is provided by those laws, even for the worst of men, that none shall injure them, that all love them and seek their good. He interposes his authority on their behalf; and if any wrong them, he takes it for an affront done to himself. By the same laws they are directed to industry, frugality, sobriety, temperance, to exercise a government over themselves, to bridle and subdue their own exorbitant lusts and passions;

their more immediate tormentors, and the sources of all the calamities and miseries which befall them in this world. By all which evidences of his great care, and concern for their welfare, they might understand him to have favourable propensions towards them, and that though they have offended him, he is not their implacable enemy; and might, by his goodness, be led to repentance.

Yea, and moreover, he hath sent them a Redeemer, his own Son, an incarnate Deity, who came down into this world, full of grace and truth, upon the most merciful errand. And they have some of them been in transports, when they have but fancied such a descent, for the doing them only some lighter good turn; as upon the cure of the cripple, "The gods," said they, "are come down in the likeness of men!"* He being filled with the glorious fulness of the Godhead, hath been a voluntary sacrifice for the sins of men; and if they would believe and obey him, they would find that sacrifice is accepted, and available for them. And though they are disabled to do so only by their own wicked inclination, even against that also they have no cause to despair of being relieved, if they would (which they might) admit the thoughts of their impotency, and the exigency of their case, and did seriously implore Divine help.

SECT. XV. Now with whom these methods succeed well, there is no suspicion of insincerity. Let us see what pretence there can be for it, with the rest. It is to be considered, that, as to them he doth not apply himself to every, or to any, person immediately, and severally, after some such tenor of speech as this, "I know thee to be a profligate hopeless wretch, and thou wilt finally disregard whatsoever I say to thee, and consequently perish and become miserable; but however (though I foresee most certainly thou wilt not, yet) I entreat thee to hear, and obey, and live." Indeed, sending a prophet to a promiscuous people, he foretells him of such ill success.† But it is not told him he should succeed so ill universally, and it is implied, he should not.‡

But the course the great God takes, is only to apply him-

* Acts xiv. 11.

† Ezek. iii. 7.

‡ Ver. 21.

self to these (as hath been said) in common with the rest. For if it be said he also applies himself to them by the private dictates of his Spirit; he doth not, by it, make formed speeches to men. But as to those its common motions, whereby it applies itself unto them, doth only solicit, in a stated manner of operation, in and by their own reason and consciences, (as he concurs with our inferior faculties, and with the inferior creatures suitable to their natures and capacities :) speaking no other than their own language, as they are instructed out of his word, or by other means; which he usually continues to do, till by their resistancies, they have sealed up their own consciences, and consequently (according to its more ordinary fixed course, and laws of access and recess) shut out the Holy Spirit both at once. Nor is it more to be expected he should universally alter that course, than that he should alter the courses of the sun, moon, and stars, and innovate upon universal nature. So that what is endeavoured for the reducement of such as finally refuse to return, by particular applications to this or that person, and beyond what is contained in the public declarations of his written word, is substituted by ministers and inferior agents, that know no more of the event than they do themselves. And that this was the fittest way of dealing with reasonable creatures, who, that will use his own reason, sees not?

SECT. XVI. That our disquisition may be here a little more strict, we shall inquire both,—What may be supposed possible to be alleged out of God's word, in reference to them that persist in wickedness till they finally perish, which it can be thought not consistent with sincerity, to have inserted upon the supposed foresight of so dismal an issue; and—What more convenient course we can think of, which sincerity, (as we apprehend) would have required.

As to the former. It may, perhaps, be alleged, that he professes to will the salvation of all men*—not to desire the death of him that dieth†—yea, and professes himself grieved that any perish.‡ Now these things, compared with his public declarations and tenders, directed, in a universal tenor,

* 1 Tim. ii. 4. † Ezek. xviii. 32. ‡ Ps. lxxxi. 12, 13.

to all men, carry that appearance and show with them, as if he would have it believed, his end were to save all. Where-with his foresight of the perdition of so many seems ill to agree. For how can that end be seriously intended which it is foreseen will not be brought about? And how can it be thought to consist with sincerity, that there should be an appearance of his having such an end, unto which a serious real intention of it doth not correspond? Wherefore we shall here examine, what appearance such expressions as those above recited, can, by just interpretation, be understood to amount unto; and then show, that there is really with the blessed God what doth truly and fully correspond to that appearance; and very agreeably too, with the hypothesis of his foreseeing how things will finally issue, with very many.

And first, that we may understand the true import of the expressions which we have mentioned, and others of like sound and meaning, we are to consider, that though being taken severally and apart, they are not capable of a sense prejudicial to the cause, the defence whereof we have undertaken; which we shall afterwards more distinctly evince; yet, it were very injurious, to go about to affix a sense unto a single expression, without weighing the general design of the writings, whereof it is a part. It were quite to frustrate the use of words, when a matter is to be represented, that is copious, and consists of many parts and branches, which cannot be comprehended in one or a few sentences; if we will pretend to estimate and make a judgment of the speaker's full meaning, by this or that single passage only, because we have not patience or leisure to hear the rest; or perhaps have a greater disposition to cavil at his words, than understand his meaning. If a course resembling this should be taken, in interpreting the edicts or laws of princes and states, (suppose it were a proclamation of pardon to delinquent subjects,) and only this or that favourable clause be fastened upon, without regard to the inserted provisos and conditions; the (concerned) interpreters might do a slight, temporary, and easily remediable wrong to the prince, but are in danger more fatally to wrong themselves.

The edicts of the great God, that are publicly extant to

mankind, (the universal publication whereof they partly withstand, and which they too commonly deprave, and perversely misinterpret, where they do obtain,) carry no such appearance with them, as if he had ever proposed it to himself, for his end, to save all men or any man, let them do what they please, or how destructive a course soever they take and shall finally persist in. If that were supposed his design, his so seemingly serious counsels and exhortations were as ludicrous as they could be thought, if it were as peremptorily determined all should perish. For what God will, by almighty power, immediately work, without the subordinate concurrence of any second cause, must be necessarily; and it is equally vain, solicitously to endeavour the engaging of subordinate agents, to do that which without them is absolutely necessary, as it were to endeavour that, by them, which is absolutely impossible.

SECT. XVII. That which his declarations to men do amount unto, is, in sum, thus much,—that, whereas they have, by their defection and revolt from him, made themselves liable to his justice, and very great consequent miseries; he is willing to pardon, save, and restore them to a blessed state, upon such terms as shall be agreeable (the recompence due to his injured law being otherwise provided for, at no expense of theirs) to the nature of that blessedness they are to enjoy, the purity of his own nature, and the order and dignity of his government. That is, that they seriously repent and turn to him, love him as the Lord their God, with all their heart and soul, and might and mind; and one another as themselves; (being to make together one happy community, in the participation of the same blessedness;) commit themselves by entire trust, subjection, and devotedness to their great and merciful Redeemer, according to the measure of light wherewith he shall have been revealed and made known to them; submit to the motions and dictates of his blessed Spirit, whereby the impression of his own holy image is to be renewed in them, and a divine nature imparted to them; and carefully attend to his word as the means, the impressive instrument or seal, by which, understood and considered, that impression shall be made, and the very seeds out of which

that holy nature, and the entire frame of the new creature, shall result and spring up in them; so as to make them apt unto the obedience that is expected from them, and capable of the blessedness they are to expect; that if they neglect to attend to these external discoveries, and refuse the ordinary aids and assistances of his good Spirit, and offer violence to their own consciences, they are not to expect he should overpower them, by a strong hand, and save them against the continuing disinclination of their own wills. Nor (whatsoever extraordinary acts he may do upon some, to make them willing) is there any universal promise in his word, or other encouragement upon which any may reasonably promise themselves that, in the neglect and disuse of all ordinary means, such power shall be used with them, as shall finally overcome their averse, disaffected hearts.

SECT. XVIII. It is true, that he frequently uses much importunity with men, and enforces his laws with that earnestness, as if it were his own great interest to have them obeyed; wherein, having to do with men, he doth like a man solicitously intent upon an end which he cannot be satisfied till he attain. Yet withal, he hath interspersed, every where, in his word, so frequent, Godlike expressions of his own greatness, all-sufficiency, and independency upon his creatures, as that if we attend to these his public declarations, and manifests of himself, entirely, so as to compare one thing with another, we shall find the matter not at all dissembled; but might collect this to be the state of things between him and us, that he makes no overtures to us as thinking us considerable, or as if any thing were to accrue to him from us; but that, as he takes pleasure in the diffusion of his own goodness, so it is our interest to behave ourselves suitably thereunto, and, according as we comply with it, and continue in it or do not, so we may expect the delectable communications of it, or taste, otherwise, his just severity. That, therefore, when he exhorts, obtests, entreats, beseeches that we would obey and live; speaks as if he were grieved at our disobedience, and what is like to ensue us therefrom; these are merciful condescensions, and the efforts of that goodness, which chooseth the fittest ways of moving

us, rather than that he is moved himself, by any such passions as we are wont to feel in ourselves, when we are pursuing our own designs; and that he vouchsafeth to speak in such a way as is less suitable to himself, that it may be more suitable to us, and might teach us, while he so far complies with us, how becoming it is that we answerably bend ourselves to a compliance with him. He speaks, sometimes, as if he did suffer somewhat human, as an apt means (and which to many proves effectual) to bring us to enjoy, at length, what is truly divine. We may, if we consider, and lay things together, understand these to be gracious insinuations; whereby, as he hath not left the matter liable to be so misunderstood, as if he were really affected with solicitude, or any perturbation concerning us, (which he hath sufficiently given us to understand his blessed nature cannot admit of,) so nor can they be thought to be disguises of himself, or misrepresentations, that have nothing in him corresponding to them. For they really signify the obedience and blessedness of those his creatures that are capable thereof, to be more pleasing and agreeable to his nature and will, than that they should disobey and perish; (which is the utmost that can be understood meant by those words, "God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth;") but withal, that he so apprehends the indignity done to his government, by their disobedience, that if they obey not (as the indulgent constitution and temper of his law and government now are, in and by the Redeemer) they must perish; and that he hath also such respect to the congruity and order of things, as that it shall not be the ordinary method of his government over reasonable creatures, to overpower them into that obedience, by which it may come to pass that they perish not. All which may be collected from those his own plain words, in that other recited text, and many besides of like import, when, with so awful solemnity, he professes, that as he lives he takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they may turn and live; and adds, "Turn ye, turn ye; why will you die?"* That is, that their repentance, and consequent welfare, would be more grateful

* Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

to him than their perdition, upon their persevering in destructive ways; but yet, that if they were not moved to repent, by these his pleadings and expostulations used with them, they should die, and were therefore concerned to attend and hearken to such his reasonings and warnings, as the apt means to work their good; not expecting he should take extraordinary courses with them, in order to it: and that the real respect he had thereunto, should never induce him to use any indecorous course to bring it about; but that he had a more principal respect to the rules of justice, and the order of his government, than to their concerns: and that he, notwithstanding, expresses himself aggrieved that any finally perish. If we consider and recollect, what notices he hath furnished our minds with, of the perfections of a Deity, and what he hath remonstrated to us of his own nature, so plainly in his word; we cannot understand more by it, than the calm dispassionate resentment and dislike, which most perfect purity and goodness have, of the sinfulness and miserable ruin of his own creatures.

In all which, we have a most unexceptionable idea of God, and may behold the comely conjuncture of his large goodness, strict righteousness, and most accurate wisdom all together: as we are also concerned, in making our estimate of his ways, to consider them; and not to take our measure of what is suitable to God, by considering him according to one single attribute only, but as they all are united, in his most perfect being; and in that blessed harmony, as not to infer with him a difficulty what to do, or what not. Which sometimes falls out with men, where there is an imperfect resemblance of those divine excellencies, not so exactly tempered together. As it was with that Spartan prince and general in Plutarch, when finding a necessity to march his army, and taking notice of one, for whom he had a peculiar kindness, that through extreme weakness was not possibly to be removed, he looked back upon him, expressing his sense of that exigency, in those emphatical words, how hard a matter is it at once *ἐλεεῖν καὶ φρονεῖν*, “to exercise pity and be wise!” God’s own word misrepresents him not, but gives a true account of him, if we allow ourselves to confer it with itself, one part of it with another. Nor doth any part of it,

taken alone, import him so to have willed the happiness of men, for any end of his, that he resolved he would, by whatsoever means, certainly effect it; as we are wont, many times, with such eagerness to pursue ends upon which we are intent, as not to consider of right or wrong, fit or unfit, in our pursuit of them, and so let the cost of our means not seldom eat up our end. Nor did that belong to him, or was his part as our most benign, wise, and righteous Governor, to provide that we should certainly not transgress, or not suffer prejudice thereby; but that we should not do so, through his omission of any thing, which it became him to do to prevent it.

SECT. XIX. It may therefore be of some use further to take notice, that a very diverse consideration must be had, of the ends which shall be effected by God's own action only, and of those which are to be brought about (in concurrence and subordination to his own) by the intervenient action of his creatures; especially (which is more to our purpose) such of them as are intelligent, and capable of being governed by laws. As to the former sort of these ends, we may be confident they were all most absolutely intended, and can never fail of being accomplished. For the latter, it cannot be universally said so. For these being not entirely his ends, but partly his, and partly prescribed by him, to his reasonable creatures, to be theirs; we are to conceive he always, most absolutely, intends to do what he righteously esteems congruous should be his own part,—which he extends and limits as seems good unto him,—and sometimes, of his own good pleasure, assumes to himself the doing of so much, as shall ascertain the end; effectually procuring, that his creature shall do his part also. That is, he not only enacts his laws, and adds exhortations, warnings, promises, to enforce it, but also emits that effectual influence, whereby the inferior wheels shall be put into motion, the powers and faculties of his governed creature excited and assisted, and (by a spirit in the wheels) made as the chariots of a willing people. At other times, and in other instances, he doth less, and meeting with resistance, sooner retires; follows not his external edicts and declarations, with so potent and determinative an

influence, but that the creature, through his own great default, may omit to do his part, and so that end be not effected.

That the course of his economy towards men on earth is, *de facto*, ordered with this diversity, seems out of question. Manifest experience shows it. Some do sensibly perceive that motive influence, which others do not. The same persons, at some times, find not that, which at other times they do. His own word plainly asserts it: "He works in us to will and to do, of his own good pleasure." Where he will, he, in this respect, shows mercy; where he will, he hardeneth, or doth not prevent but that men be hardened. And indeed, we should be constrained to rase out a great part of the sacred volume, if we should not admit it to be so. And as the equity and fitness of his making such difference (when it appears he doth make it) cannot without profaneness be doubted, so it is evident, from what was before said, they are far removed from the reach and confines of any reasonable doubt; since he forsakes none, but being first forsaken. Nor have men any pretence to complain of subdalous dealing, or that they are surprisingly disappointed, and lurches of such help as they might have expected; inasmuch as this is so plainly extant in God's open manifests to the world, that he uses a certain arbitrariness, especially in the more exuberant dispensation of his grace; and is inserted to that purpose, that they may be cautioned not to neglect lower assistances; and warned, because he works to will and to do of his own pleasure, therefore to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.* Whereupon, elsewhere, after the most persuasive alluring invitations: "Turn ye at my reproof: I will pour out my Spirit to you, I will make known my words to you," it is presently subjoined: "Because I called and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh."†

From all which it is plainly to be understood, that the general strain and drift of God's external revelation of his

* Phil. ii. 12, 13.

† Prov. i. 24—26.

mind to man, in his word, and the aspect of even those passages that can, with most colour, be thought to signify any thing further, do amount to nothing more than this, that he doth so far really will the salvation of all, as not to omit the doing that which may effect it, if they be not neglectful of themselves ; but not so as to effect it by that extraordinary exertion of power, which he thinks fit to employ upon some others.

Nor is it reasonably to be doubted, (such a will being all that can be pretended to be the visible meaning of the passages before noted,) whether there be such a will in God or no : and so somewhat really corresponding, (the next thing promised to be discoursed) to the aspect and appearance hereof, which is offered to our view. For what should be the reason of the doubt ? He, who best understands his own nature, having said of himself what imports no less ; why should we make a difficulty to believe him ? Nor indeed can any notices we have of the perfections of the divine nature be less liable to doubt, than what we have of his unchangeable veracity ; whence, as it is impossible to him to lie, it must be necessary, that he be really willing of what he hath represented himself so to be. I must here profess my dislike of the terms of that common distinction, the *voluntas beneplaciti, et signi*, in this present case : under which, such as coined, and those that have much used it, have only rather, I doubt not, concealed a good meaning, than expressed by it an ill one. It seems, I confess, by its more obvious aspect, too much to countenance the ignominious slander, which profane and atheistical dispositions would fasten upon God, and the course of his procedure towards men ; and which it is the design of these papers to evince of as much absurdity and folly, as it is guilty of impiety and wickedness ; as though he only intended to seem willing of what he really was not ; that there was an appearance to which nothing did *subesse*. And then why is the latter called *voluntas* ? unless the meaning be, he did only will the sign ; which is false and impious ; and if it were true, did he not will it with the will of good pleasure ? And then the members of the distinction are confounded ; or, as if the evil actions of men were more truly the objects of his good pleasure, than their forbearance of

them. And of these faults the application of the distinction of God's secret will, and revealed, unto this case, though it be useful in many, is as guilty.

SECT. XX. The truth is, (unto which we must esteem ourselves obliged to adhere, both by our assent and defence,) that God doth really and complacentially will (and therefore doth with most unexceptionable sincerity declare himself to will) that to be done and enjoyed by many men, which he doth not, universally, will to make them do, or irresistibly procure that they shall enjoy. Which is no harder assertion, than that the impure will of degenerate, sinful man, is opposite to the holy will of God; and the malignity of man's will to the benignity of his—no harder than that there is sin and misery in the world, which how can we conceive otherwise, than as a repugnancy to the good and acceptable will of God? Methinks it should not be difficult to us to acknowledge, that God doth truly, and with complacency, will whatsoever is the holy, righteous matter of his own laws. And if it should be with any a difficulty, I would only make this supposition, what if all the world were yet in innocency, yielding entire universal obedience to all the now extant laws of God, which have not reference to man as now fallen, (as those of repentance, faith in a Mediator, &c.) would it now be a doubt with any, whether God did truly and really will, and were pleased with, the holiness and righteousness which were every where to be found in the world? Surely we would not, in this case, imagine the creature's will more pure and holy than the divine; or that he were displeased with men for their being righteous and holy. Now again, suppose the world revolted, what then is that holy will of God changed? will we not say it remains the same holy law still, and stands the same rule of righteousness and duty that it was? Doth the change of his rebel creatures infer any with him? or do only the declarations of his former will remain to be their rule, and keep them still obliged, his will itself being become another from what it was? Surely he might as easily have changed his laws.

And if we say his will is changed, how should we know it to be so? If we know it not, surely such a thing should not

be said or thought. If we knew it, how should those yet extant laws and declarations continue to oblige, against the lawgiver's known will? And then the easy expedient to nullify the obligation of a law, that were thought too restrictive, were to disobey it. And men might, by sinning once, license themselves to do the same thing (though then we could not call it sinning) always; and so the creature's should be the supreme and ruling will; nor had it been a false suggestion, but a real truth, that man, by becoming a sinner, might make himself a God. Or, if it shall be thought fit to say, that the divine will would not, in that supposed case, be said to be changed; but only, that now the event makes it appear not to have been what we thought it was; that were to impute both impurity and dissimulation to the holy, blessed God, as his fixed attributes, and what we thought unfit, and should abhor, to imagine might have place with him one moment, to affix to him for perpetuity.

SECT. XXI. And whereas it may be thought to follow hence, that hereby we ascribe to God a liableness to frustration and disappointment; that is without pretence: the resolve of the divine will, in this matter, being not concerning the event what man shall do, but concerning his duty what he should, and concerning the connexion between his duty and his happiness; which we say he doth not only seem to will, but wills it really and truly. Nor would his prescience of the event, which we all this while assert, let frustration be so much as possible to him; especially, it being at once foreseen, that his will, being crossed in this, would be fulfilled in so important a thing, as the preserving the decorum of his own government, which had been most apparently blemished, beyond what could consist with the perfections of the Deity, if either his will concerning men's duty, or the declarations of that will, had not been substantially the same that they are. We are, therefore, in assigning the object of this or that act of the divine will, to do it entirely, and to take the whole object together, without dividing it, as if the will of God did wholly terminate upon what indeed is but a part (and especially if that be but a less considerable part) of the thing willed. In the present case,

we are not to conceive that God only wills either man's duty or felicity, or that herein his will doth solely and ultimately terminate. But, in the whole, the determination of God's will is, that man shall be duly governed, that is, congruously both to himself and him; that such and such things, most congruous to both, shall be man's duty, by his doing whereof, the dignity and honour of God's own government might be preserved, which was the thing principally to be designed, and in the first place; and, as what was secondary thereto, that hereby man's felicity should be provided for. Therefore it being foreseen a violation would be done to the sacred rights of the divine government, by man's disobedience, it is resolved, they shall be repaired and maintained by other means. So that the divine will hath its effect, as to what was its more noble and principal design; the other part failing only by his default, whose is the loss.

And if yet it should be insisted, that in asserting God to will what by his laws he hath made become man's duty, even where it is not done, we shall herein ascribe to him, at least, an ineffectual and an imperfect will, as which doth not bring to pass the thing willed: it is answered, that imperfection were with no pretence imputable to the divine will, merely for its not effecting every thing, whereto it may have a real propension. But it would be more liable to that imputation, if it should effect any thing, which it were less fit for him to effect, than not to effect it. The absolute perfection of his will stands in the proportion, which every act of it bears, to the importance of the things about which it is conversant: even as with men, the perfection of any act of will is to be estimated, not by the mere peremptory sturdiness of it, but by its proportion to the goodness of the thing willed. Upon which account, a mere velleity (as many love to speak) when the degree of goodness in the object claims no more, hath unconceivably greater perfection in it, than the most obstinate volition. And since the event forbids us to admit that God did ever will the obedience and felicity of all, with such a will as should be effective thereof: if yet his plain word shall be acknowledged the measure of our belief, in this matter, which so plainly asserts him some way to will the salvation of all men, it is strange if, hereupon, we shall not admit

rather of a will not-effective of the thing willed, than none at all.

The will of God is sufficiently to be vindicated from all imperfection, if we have sufficient reason for all the propensions and determinations of it, whether from the value of the things willed, or from his own sovereignty who wills them. In the present case, we need not doubt to affirm, that the obedience and felicity of all men is of that value, as whereunto a propension of will, by only simple complacency, is proportionable. Yet, that his not procuring, as to all, (by such courses as he more extraordinarily takes with some,) that they shall, in event, obey and be happy, is upon so much more valuable reasons (as there will be further occasion to show ere long) as that, not to do it, with the higher complacency of a determinative will, was more eligible. And since the public declarations of his good will, towards all men, import no more than the former, and do plainly import so much; their correspondency to the matter declared is sufficiently apparent. And so is the congruity of both with his prescience of the event. For though, when God urges and incites men, by exhortations, promises, and threats, to the doing of their own part, (which it is most agreeable to his holy, gracious nature to do,) he foresee many will not be moved thereby; but persist in wilful neglect and rebellions till they perish; he, at the same time, sees that they might do otherwise, and that, if they would comply with his methods, things would otherwise issue with them: his prescience no way imposing upon them a necessity to transgress. For they do it not because he foreknew it, but he only foreknew it because they would do so. And hence he had, as it was necessary he should have, not only this for the object of his foreknowledge, that they would do amiss and perish; but the whole case in its circumstances, that they would do so, not through his omission, but their own. And there had been no place left for this state of the case, if the public edicts and manifests had not gone forth, in this tenor, as they have. So that the consideration of his prescience being taken in, gives us only, in the whole, this state of the case, that he foresaw men would not take that course which he truly declared himself willing they should (and was graciously ready to assist

them in it) in order to their own well-being. Whence all complaint of insincere dealing is left without pretence.

SECT. XXII. Nor (as we also undertook to show) could any course (within our prospect) have been taken, that was fit, in itself, and more agreeable to sincerity. There are only these two ways to be thought on besides; either, that God should wholly have forborne to make overtures to men in common; or, that he should efficaciously have overpowered all into a compliance with them. And there is little doubt, but upon sober consideration, both of these will be judged altogether unfit. The former, inasmuch as it had been most disagreeable—to the exact measures of his government, to let a race of sinful creatures persist, through many successive ages, in apostacy and rebellion, when the characters of that law, first written in man's heart, were in so great a measure outworn, and become illegible, without renewing the impression in another way, and re-asserting his right and authority, as their ruler and Lord:—to the holiness of his nature, not to send into the world such a declaration of his will, as might be a standing testimony against the impurity whereinto it was lapsed;—to the goodness of it, not to make known upon what terms, and for whose sake, he was reconcileable; and—to the truth of the thing, since he really had such kind propensions towards men in common, not make them known:—that it had, itself, been more liable to the charge of insincerity, to have concealed from men what was real truth, and of so much concernment to them. And he did, in revealing them, but act his own nature; the goodness whereof is no more lessened, by men's refusal of its offers, than his truth can be made of none effect by their disbelief of its assertions: besides the great use such an extant revelation of the way of recovery was to be of, to those that should obediently comply with it, even after they should be won so to do.

SECT. XXIII. And the latter we may also apprehend very unfit too; though, because that is less obvious, it requires to be more largely insisted on. For it would seem that if we do not effect any thing which we have a real will unto, it must proceed from impotency, and that we cannot do it;

which, who would say of the great God? Herein, therefore, we shall proceed by steps, and gradually offer the things that follow to consideration.

As, that it were indeed most repugnant to the notion of a deity, to suppose any thing, which includes in it no contradiction impossible to God, considered according to that single attribute of power only. But yet we must add, that this were a very unequal way of estimating what God can do, that is, to consider him as a mere being of power. For the notion of God so conceived, were very inadequate to him, which taken entirely, imports the comprehension of all perfections. So that they are two very distant questions,—What the power of God alone could do? and—What God can do? And whereas to the former the answer would be,—whatsoever is not in itself repugnant to be done; to the latter, it must only be,—whatsoever it becomes or is agreeable to a being every way perfect to do. And so it is to be attributed to the excellency of his nature, if, amongst all things not simply impossible, there be any which it may be truly said he cannot do. Or, it proceeds not from the imperfection of his power, but from the concurrence of all other perfections in him. Hence his own word plainly affirms of him that he cannot lie. And by common consent it will be acknowledged, that he cannot do any unjust act whatsoever.

To this I doubt not we may with as common suffrage (when the matter is considered) subjoin, that his wisdom doth as much limit the exercise of his power, as his righteousness or his truth doth; and that it may, with as much confidence and clearness, be said and understood, that he cannot do an unwise or imprudent act as an unjust. Further, that as his righteousness corresponds to the justice of things, to be done or not done, so doth his wisdom to the congruity or fitness. So that he cannot do what it is unfit for him to do, because he is wise; and because he is most perfectly and infinitely wise, therefore nothing that is less fit. But whatsoever is fittest, when a comparison is made between doing this or that, or between doing and not doing, that the perfection of his nature renders necessary to him, and the opposite part impossible. Again, that this measure must be understood to have a very large and most general

extent unto all the affairs of his government, the object it concerns being so very large. We, in our observation, may take notice, that fewer questions can occur concerning what is right or wrong, than what is fit or unfit. And whereas any man may in a moment be honest, if he have a mind to it; very few (and that by long experience) can ever attain to be wise. The things about which justice is conversant being reducible to certain rules, but wisdom supposes very general knowledge of things scarce capable of such reduction. It is, besides, the primary requisite, in any one that bears rule over others: and must therefore most eminently influence all the managements of the Supreme Ruler.

SECT. XXIV. It is moreover to be considered, that innumerable congruities lie open to the Infinite Wisdom, which are never obvious to our view or thought: as, to a well-studied scholar, thousands of coherent notions, which an illiterate person never thought of; to a practised courtier, or well-educated gentleman, many decencies and indecencies, in the matter of civil behaviour and conversation, which an unbred rustic knows nothing of; and to an experienced statesman, those importancies, which never occur to the thoughts of him who daily follows the plough. What government is there that hath not its arcana, profound mysteries and reasons of state, that a vulgar wit cannot dive into? And from whence, the account to be given, why this or that is done or not done, is not, always, that it would have been unjust it should be otherwise, but it had been imprudent. And many things are, hereupon, judged necessary not from the exigency of justice, but reason of state. Whereupon men of modest and sober minds, that have had experience of the wisdom of their governors and their happy conduct, through a considerable tract of time; when they see things done by them, the leading reasons whereof they do not understand, and the effect and success comes not yet in view, suspend their censure, while as yet all seems to them obscure, and wrapt up in clouds and darkness; yea though the course that is taken have, to their apprehension, an ill aspect; accounting it becomes them not, to make a judgment of things so far above their reach, and confiding in the tried wisdom of their rulers,

who, they believe, see reasons for what they do, into which they find themselves unable to penetrate. With how much more submissive and humble veneration ought the methods of the Divine government to be beheld and adored, upon the certain assurance we have, that all things therein are managed by that wisdom, which could never in any thing mistake its way! Whereas, there was never any continued administration of human government so accurate and exact, but that after some tract of time, some or other errors might be reflected on therein.

Again, it may further be said, without presuming beyond due bounds, that though infinite congruities must be supposed to lie open to the divine understanding, which are concealed from ours, yet that these two things in the general are very manifestly congruous to any sober attentive mind, that directly concern, or may be applied to the case under our present consideration, viz. That the course of God's government over the world, be, for the most part, steady and uniform, not interrupted by very frequent, extraordinary, and anomalous actions; and again, That he use a royal liberty, of stepping out of his usual course, sometimes, as he sees meet. It cannot but appear to such as attend, highly incongruous, should we affirm the antithesis to either of these; or lay down counterpositions to them, and suppose the course of the Divine government to be managed agreeably thereunto.

SECT. XXV. For, as to the former; what confusion would it make in the world, if there should be perpetual innovations upon nature—continual or exceeding frequent impeditions, and restraints of second causes. In the sphere of nature, the virtues and proper qualities of things, being never certain, could never be understood or known. In that of policy, no measures, so much as probable, could ever be taken. How much better is it, in both, that second causes ordinarily follow their inclinations! And why is it not to be thought congruous, that, in some degree, things should be proportionally so, in the sphere of grace? whereto, by and by, we shall speak more directly. We pray, when our friends are sick, for their recovery. What can be the sober meaning and de-

sign of such prayers? Not that God would work a miracle for their restitution, (for then we might as well pray for their revival after death,) but, that God would be pleased so to co-operate, in the still and silent way of nature, with second causes, and so bless means, that they may be recovered, if he see good: otherwise that they and we may be prepared to undergo his pleasure. And agreeable hereto ought to be the intent of our prayers, in reference to the public affairs, and better posture of the world. And we may take notice, the Divine wisdom lays a very great stress upon this matter, the preserving of the common order of things; and cannot but observe a certain inflexibleness of Providence herein; and that it is very little apt to divert from its wonted course. At which weak minds are apt to take offence: to wonder, that against so many prayers and tears God will let a good man die, or one whom they love; or that a miracle is not wrought to prevent their own being wronged at any time; or, that the earth doth not open and swallow up the person that hath done them wrong: are apt to call for fire from heaven, upon them that are otherwise minded, and do otherwise than they would have them. But a judicious person would consider, if it be so highly reasonable that my desires should be complied with so extraordinarily, then why not all men's? And then were the world filled with prodigies and confusion. The inconveniences would soon be to all equally discernible and intolerable; (as the heathen poet takes notice, should Jupiter's ear be over-easy;) yea, and the impossibility were obvious of gratifying all, because of their many counter-desires.

And for the other; it were no less incongruous, if the Supreme Power should so tie its own hands, and be so astricted to rules and methods, as never to do any thing extraordinary, upon never so important occasion. How ill could the world have wanted such an effort of omnipotency, as the restriction upon the flames from destroying Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! or the miracles wrought in our Saviour's and the next following days! Such things are never done, but when the all-comprehending wisdom sees it most congruous; and that the cause will over-recompense the deflection from the common course. If no such thing

did ever fall out, what a temptation were it to mankind, to introduce into their belief an unintelligent fate instead of a Deity! Besides that the convincing testimony were wanting, which we see is so necessary for the confirmation of any particular revelation from God, which comes not within the compass of nature's discovery, (upon which account also, it is as apparently necessary such extraordinary works should not be over-frequent, for then they become ordinary, and useless to that special end,) so that here the exertions both of the ordinate and absolute power of God (as some distinguish) have their so appropriate, and so visibly apt and congruous, uses, that they are discernible to a very ordinary understanding, how much more to the infinite wisdom of God!

SECT. XXVI. Now hereupon we say further, there is the like congruity, upon as valuable (though not altogether the same) reasons that, in the affairs of grace, there be somewhat correspondent; that, ordinarily, it be sought and expected, in the use of ordinary means; and that, sometimes, its sovereignty show itself in preventing exertions, and in working so heroically, as none have, beforehand, in the neglect of its ordinary methods, any reason to expect. And we may fitly add, that where sovereignty is pleased thus to have its exercise and demonstrate itself, it is sufficient that there be a general congruity, that it do so sometimes, as an antecedent reason to the doing of some such extraordinary things; but that there should be a particular, leading congruity or antecedent reason, to invite those extraordinary operations of grace to one person more than another, is not necessary. But it is most congruous, that, herein, it be most arbitrary; most agreeable to the supremacy of God; to the state of sinful man, who hath infinitely disoblighed him, and can deserve nothing from him; yea, and even to the nature of the thing. For, where there is a parity, in any objects of our own choice, there can be no leading reason to this, rather than that. The most prudent man, that is wont to guide himself by never so exquisite wisdom, in his daily actions, where there is a perfect indifferency between doing this thing or that, is not liable to censure, that he is not able to give a reason why he did that, not the other: wisdom hath no exercise in that case.

But that the blessed God doth ordinarily proceed in these affairs by a steady rule, and sometimes show his liberty of departing from it, is to be resolved into his infinite wisdom, it being, in itself, most fit he should do both the one and the other; and therefore to him most necessary. Whereupon, the great apostle, St. Paul, discoursing upon this subject, doth not resolve the matter into strict justice, nor absolute sovereignty; (both which have their place too, in his proceedings with men, as the sacred writings do abundantly testify;) but we find him in a transport, in the contemplation of the Divine wisdom, that herein so eminently shines forth: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"*

SECT. XXVII. To sum up all, we conclude it obvious to the apprehension of such as consider, that it was more congruous the general course of God's government over man should be by moral instruments. And howsoever it were very unreasonable to imagine, that God cannot in any case extraordinarily overway the inclinations, and determine the will of such a creature, in a way agreeable enough to its nature, (though we particularly know not, as we are not concerned to know, or curiously to inquire in what way,) and highly reasonable to admit that in many cases he doth; it is notwithstanding manifest, to any sober reason, that it were very incongruous, this should be the ordinary course of his conduct towards mankind, or the same persons at all times. That is, that a whole order of intelligent creatures should be moved only by inward impulses; that God's precepts, promises, and comminations, whereof their nature is capable, should be all made impertinencies, through his constant overpowering those that should neglect them; that the faculties, whereby men are capable of moral government, should be rendered, to this purpose, useless and vain; and that they should be tempted to expect to be constantly managed as mere machines, that know not their own use.

* Rom. xi. 33. See to the same purpose, ch. xvi. 25, 26, 27; and Eph. i. 5, 6, 7, with the 8th.

Nor it is less apprehensible, how incongruous it were also, on the other hand, to suppose that the exterior frame of God's government should be totally unaccompanied with an internal vital energy; or exclude the inward motions, operations, and influences, whereof such a creature is also fitly capable; or that God should have barred out himself from all inward access to the spirits of men, or commerce with them: that the supreme, universal, paternal mind (as a heathen called it) should have no way for efficacious communications to his own offspring when he pleases; that so (unsuitably to sovereignty) he should have no objects of special favour, or no peculiar ways of expressing it. It is manifestly congruous that the Divine government over man, should be (as it is) mixed or composed of an external frame of laws, with their proper sanctions and enforcements, and an internal effusion of power and vital influence, correspondent to the several parts of that frame; and which might animate the whole, and use it, as instrumental, to the begetting of correspondent impressions on men's spirits:—that this power be put forth, not like that of a natural agent, *ad ultimum*, (which if we would suppose the Divine power to be, new worlds must be springing up every moment,) but gradually, and with an apt contemperation to the subject, upon which it is designed; to have its operations and withal arbitrarily, as is becoming the great Agent from whom it proceeds, and to whom it therefore belongs to measure its exertions, as seems meet unto him:—that it be constantly put forth (though most gratuitously, especially the disobligation of the apostacy being considered) upon all to that degree, as that they be enabled to do much good, to which they are not impelled by it:—that it be ever ready (since it is the power of grace) to go forth in a further degree than it had yet done, wheresoever any former issues of it have been duly complied with. Though it be so little supposable that man should hereby have obliged God thereto, that he hath not any way obliged himself, otherwise, than that he hath implied a readiness to impart unto man what shall be necessary to enable him to obey, so far as, upon the apostacy, is requisite to his relief; if he seriously endeavour to do his own part, by the power he already hath received; agreeably to the common saying, *homini facienti quod in se*

est, &c. That, according to the royal liberty wherewith it works, it go forth, as to some, with that efficacy, as notwithstanding whatever resistance yet to overcome, and make them captives to the authority and love of Christ.

SECT. XXVIII. The universal, continued rectitude of all intelligent creatures had, we may be sure, been willed with a peremptory, efficacious will if it had been best. That is, if it had not been less congruous than to keep them some time (under the expectation of future confirmation and reward) upon trial of their fidelity, and in a state wherein it might not be impossible to them to make a defection. And so it had easily been prevented, that ever there should have been an apostacy from God, or any sin in the world. Nor was it either less easy by a mighty irresistible hand, universally to expel sin, than prevent it; or more necessary or more to be expected from him. But if God's taking no such course, tended to render his government over the world more august and awful for the present, and the result and final issue of all things more glorious at length, and were consequently more congruous; that could not be so willed, as to be effectually procured by him. For whatsoever obligation strict justice hath upon us, that congruity cannot but have upon him. And whereas it would be concluded, that whatsoever any one truly wills, they would effect if they could, we admit it for true, and to be applied in the present case; but add, that as we rightly esteem that impossible to us which we cannot justly do, so is that to him, not only which he cannot do justly, but which, upon the whole matter, he cannot do most wisely also; that is, which his infinite wisdom doth not dictate is most congruous and fit to be done.

Things cohere and are held together, in the course of his dispensation, by congruities as by adamantine bands, and cannot be otherwise. That is, comparing and taking things together, especially the most important. For otherwise, to have been nicely curious about every minute thing, singly considered, that it might not possibly have been better, (as in the frame of this or that individual animal or the like,) had been needlessly to interrupt the course of nature, and therefore, itself, to him an incongruity; and doth, in them that

expect it, import more of a trifling disposition than of true wisdom. But to him whose being is most absolutely perfect, to do that which, all things considered, would be simply best, i. e. most becoming him, most honourable and Godlike, is absolutely necessary; and consequently, it is to be attributed to his infinite perfection, that unto him, to do otherwise is absolutely impossible. And if we yet see not all these congruities which to him are more than a law, it is enough that they are obvious to his own eye, who is the only competent judge. Yet moreover, it is finally to be considered, that the methods of the Divine government are, besides his, to be exposed to the view and judgment of other intellects than our own, and we expect they shall to our own, in another state. What conception thereof is already received and formed in our minds, is but an embryo, no less imperfect than our present state is.

It were very unreasonable to expect, since this world shall continue but a little while, that all God's managements and ways of procedure, in ordering the great affairs of it, should be attempered and fitted to the judgment that shall be made of them in this temporary state, that will so soon be over, and to the present apprehension and capacity of our now so muddled and distempered minds. A vast and stable eternity remains, wherein the whole celestial chorus shall entertain themselves with the grateful contemplation and applause of his deep counsels. Such things as now seem perplex and intricate to us, will appear most irreprehensibly fair and comely to angelical minds; and to our own, when we shall be vouchsafed a place amongst that happy community. What discovery God affords of his own glorious excellencies and perfections, is principally intended to recommend him in that state wherein he, and all his ways and works, are to be beheld with everlasting and most complacential approbation. Therefore, though now we should covet the clearest and most satisfying account of things that can be had, we are yet to exercise patience, and not precipitate our judgment of them before the time: as knowing our present conceptions will differ more from what they will be hereafter, than those of a child from the maturer thoughts of the wisest man; and that

many of our conceits, which we thought wise, we shall then see cause to put away as childish things.

The disorder, Sir, of this heap rather than frame of thoughts and discourse, as it cannot be thought more unsuitable to the subject than suitable to the author; and the less displease, by how much it could less be expected to be otherwise, from him, even in the best circumstances; so it may lay some claim to your easier pardon, as having been mostly huddled up in the intervals of a troublesome, long journey; wherein he was rather willing to take what opportunity the inconveniences and hurry of it could allow him, than neglect any, of using the earliest endeavour to approve himself, as he is your great admirer.

Most honoured Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

H. W.

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE LETTER

ON THE

RECONCILEABLENESS OF GOD'S PRESCIENCE, &c.

FINDING that this discourse of the "Reconcileableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men, with the wisdom and sincerity of his counsels, exhortations, &c." hath been misunderstood and misrepresented; I think it requisite to say somewhat briefly in reference thereto. I wrote it upon the motion of that honourable gentleman to whom it is inscribed; who apprehended somewhat of that kind might be of use to render our religion less exceptionable to some persons of an inquiring disposition, that might perhaps be too sceptical and pendulous, if not prejudiced. Having finished it, I thought it best the author's name should pass under some disguise, supposing it might so better serve its end: for knowing my name could not give the cause an advantage, I was not willing it should be in a possibility of making it incur any disadvantage. And therefore, as I have observed some in such cases, to make use only of the two last letters, I imitated some other, in the choice of the penultimate. But perceiving that discourse now to fall under animadversion, I reckon it becoming to be no longer concealed. It was unavoidable to me, if I would, upon reasonable terms, apply myself to the consideration of the matter I had undertaken, of showing the consistency of God's prescience of the sins of men, with the preventive methods we find him to have used against them, to express somewhat of my sense of (what I well knew to have been asserted by divers school-men) God's predeterminative concurrence to

the sins of men also. For it had been (any one may see) very idle and ludicrous trifling, to offer at reconciling those methods with God's prescience, and have waved that manifestly greater difficulty, of reconciling them with his pre-determinative concurrence, if I had thought there had been such a thing; and were a like case, as if a chirurgion, undertaking a wounded person, should apply himself, with a great deal of diligence and address, to the cure of a finger slightly scratched, and totally neglect a wound feared to be mortal in his breast.

And whereas I reckoned God's prescience of all whatsoever futurities, and consequently of the sins of men, most certain and demonstrable, (though it was not the business of this discourse to demonstrate it, but supposing it, to show its reconcileableness with what it seemed not so well to agree with,) if I had believed his predeterminative concurrence to the sins of men to be as certain: perfect despair of being able to say any thing to purpose in this case, had made me resolve to say nothing in either. For to show how it might stand with the wisdom and sincerity of the blessed God, to counsel men not to sin, to profess his hatred and detestation of it, to remonstrate to men the great danger they should incur by it; with so great appearance of seriousness to exhort, warn, expostulate with them concerning it; express his great displeasure and grief for their sinning, and consequent miseries; and yet all the while act them on thereto, by a secret, but mighty and irresistible, influence,—seemed to me an utterly hopeless and impossible undertaking;—the other, without this, (supposing, as to this, the case to have been as some have thought it,) a very vain one. But being well assured, that what seemed the greater difficulty, and to carry most of terror and affright in the face of it, was only a chimera, I reckoned the other very superable; and therefore directed my discourse thither, according to the first design of it, which was in effect but to justify God's making such a creature as man, and governing him agreeably to his nature.

Now judging it requisite, that he who should read that discourse concerning this designed subject with any advantage, should have the same thoughts of the other, which was

waved, that I had; I apprehended it necessary to communicate those thoughts concerning that, as I did. Not operosely, and as my business, but only on the bye, and as was fit in reference to a thing that was to be waved, and not insisted on. Now I perceive that some persons, who had formerly entertained that strange opinion of God's predeterminative concurrence to the wickedest actions, and not purged their minds of it, have been offended with that letter, for not expressing more respect unto it; and yet offered nothing themselves, (which to me seems exceeding strange,) for the solving of that great difficulty and encumbrance, which it infers upon our religion. Nor do I much wonder, that this opinion of predeterminative concurrence to sinful actions, should have some stiff adherents among ourselves. For having been entertained by certain Dominicans, that were apprehended in some things to approach nearer us than others of the Roman church, it came to receive favour and countenance from some of our own, of considerable note for piety and learning, whose name and authority cannot but be expected to have much influence on the minds of many. But I somewhat wonder, that they who have had no kindness for this letter, upon the account of its dissent from them, in this particular, should not allow it common justice. For, because it hath not said every thing they would have had it say, and that would have been grateful to themselves, they impute to it the having said what it said not, and what they apprehended would be most ungrateful to all pious and sober men. The sum is, they give out concerning it, that it denies the providence of God about sin, which all good men ought to abhor from; and insinuate that it falls in with the sentiments of Durandus, which they know many think not well of.

All that I intend to do, for the present, upon this occasion, shall be to show wherein the letter is misrepresented, and charged with what it hath not in it; to remark what is said against that supposed sense of it, and give the true sense of what it says touching this matter, with a further account of the author's mind herein than it was thought fit to insert into so transient and occasional a discourse as that part of the letter was; whereby it may be seen, wherein he agrees with those of that opposite persuasion, and what the very point of dif-

ference is. Further than this, I yet intend not to go, till I see further need. There have two discourses come to my view that have referred to that letter. The one in manuscript only; which, because it is uncertain to me whether the reputed author of it will own it or no, and because it says little or nothing by way of argument, against the true sense of the letter, I shall take no further present notice of. The other is printed, and offers at somewhat of argument, which therefore I shall more attentively consider. It doth this letter an honour, whereof its author never had the least ambition or expectation, to insert the mention of it into the close of a very learned, elaborate work; * with which it might, yet, easily be imagined, its simplicity, and remoteness from any pretence to learning would so ill agree, that a quarrel could not but ensue. It is from one, who having spent a great part of his time in travelling through some regions of literature, and been peaceable, as far as I have understood, in his travels, it might have been hoped would have let this pamphlet alone; when, for what I can observe, he finds no fault with it but what he makes, and is fain to accuse it of what is no where to be found in it, lest it should be innocent.

It is an unaccountable pleasure which men of some humours take, in depraving what is done by others, when there is nothing attempted that doth interfere with them; nothing that can, righteously, be understood to cross any good end, which they more openly pretend to, nor the more concealed end (if they have any such) of their own glory. Common edification seems less designed, when every thing must be thrown down which is not built by their own hands, or by their own line and measure. I plead nothing of merit in this little essay; only I say for it, that I know not what it can be guilty of towards this learned man, that can have occasioned this assault upon it by his pen. By how much the less it keeps his road, the more I might have thought it out of the way of his notice. I am sure it meant him no harm, nor had any design to pilfer from him any part of his collections. But he says, he may not let it pass. Then there is no remedy. But I wonder what he should mean by

* Court of the Gentiles, part ii. page 522.

“he may not.” It must either mean, that he thought it unlawful to let it pass, or that he had a mighty strong and irresistible inclination to squabble a little with it. The former cannot be imagined. For then, for the same reason, he would have attempted sundry others of former and later days, that have said much to the purpose, which this letter doth but touch *obiter*, and on the bye, in its way to another design. But those were giants, whom it was not so safe to meddle with: therefore he could very wisely let them pass, though they have wounded his beloved cause, beyond all that it is in the power of his (or any) art to cure. Whence it is consequent, that the whole business must be resolved into the latter. And this inclination cannot but owe itself to some peculiar aspect and reference he had to the author; whom, though he was in *incognito*, yet (as I have been informed) he professes to have discoursed with upon the same subject many times. And so, therefore, he might once more, before this public rencounter, if he had thought fit, and nature could have been repelled awhile.

It is true, he hath found me not facile to entertain his sentiments in this matter. And, indeed, I have deeply dreaded the portentous imaginations which I found had more lightly tintured his mind, as to this thing, concerning the blessed God; than which, upon deliberation, I do believe, no human wit can ever devise worse; and as I have often freely told divers of my friends, and it is very likely, among them, himself. Though I do not suspect the contagion to have infected his vitals; by a privilege, vouchsafed to some, that they may possibly drink some deadly thing that shall not hurt them. But why must an impatiency of this dissent break out into so vindictive an hostility? I will not say I expected more friendly dealing; for as I do well know it was very possible such a public contest might have been managed with that candour and fairness, as not at all to entrench upon friendship; so, as it is, I need not own so much weakness, as upon many years’ experience, not to be able to distinguish and understand, there are some tempers less capable of the ingenuities that belong to that pleasant relation. But it was only a charitable error, of which I repent not, that I expected a more righteous dealing.

He pretends to give my sense in other words, and then gravely falls to combating his own man of straw, which he will have represent me ; and so I am to be tortured in effigy. It can never be proved, that it implies a contradiction for God to make a creature which should be capable of acting without immediate concurrence. This he puts in a different character, as if I had said so much. And why might not my own words be allowed to speak my own sense, but that his understanding and eyes must then have conspired to tell him, that the sense would have been quite another ? It is a predeterminative concurrence to all actions, even those that are most malignantly wicked, and again, God's concurring by a determinative influence unto wicked actions, which is the only thing I speak of ; as what I cannot reconcile with the wisdom and sincerity of his councils and exhortations against such actions. And if he had designed to serve any common good end, in this undertaking of his, why did he not attempt to reconcile them himself ? But the wisdom and sincerity of God are thought fit (as it would seem) to be sacrificed to the reputation of his more peculiarly admired schoolmen. If there be such a universal determination by an irresistible divine influence, to all even the wickedest actions, (which God forbid !) methinks such a difficulty should not be so easily passed over. And surely the reconciling such a determinative influence with the Divine wisdom and sincerity, had been a performance worth all his learned labours besides, and of greater service to the Christian name and honour.

But it seems the denying concurrence by such predetermining influence, is the denying of all immediate concurrence. And I am sent to the Thomists, Scotists, Jesuits, and Suarez more especially to be taught otherwise ; as if all these were for determinative concurrence ; which is very pleasant, when the very heads of the two first-mentioned sects were against it, as we shall see further anon ; the third generally, and Suarez particularly, whom he names, have so industriously and strongly opposed it. Yea, and because I assent not to the doctrine of predeterminative concurrence, I am represented (which was the last spite that was to be done me) as a favourer of the hypothesis of Durandus. And he might as

truly have said of Henry Nicholas, but not so prudently, because he knows whose opinions have a nearer alliance to that family. Now I heartily wish I had a ground for so much charity towards him, as to suppose him ignorant that *immediate concurrence*, and *determinative*, are not wont to be used by the schoolmen, in this controversy, as terms of the same signification. If he do himself think them to be all one, what warrant is that to him to give the same for my sense; when it is so well known they are not commonly so taken, and that *determinative concurrence* is so voluminously written against, where *immediate* is expressly asserted? Let him but soberly tell me, what his design was, to dash out the word *determining* from what he recites of that letter, and put in *immediate*, which he knows is not to be found in any of the places he refers to in it. Or what was the spring of that confidence that made him intimate the Scotists, Thomists, the Jesuits, and particularly Suarez, to be against what is said in the letter, in this thing? If he could procure all the books in the world to be burnt, besides those in his own library, he would yet have a hard task to make it be believed in the next age, that all these were for God's efficacious determination of the wills of men unto wicked actions.

I need not, after all this, concern myself as to what he says about the *no medium* between the extremes of his disjunctive proposition. Either the human will must depend upon the Divine independent will of God, &c., (as he phrases it in the excess of his caution, lest any should think the will of God was not a divine will,) or God must depend on the human will, &c.; unless he can show that the human will cannot be said to depend on the divine, as being enabled by it, except it be also determined and impelled by it to every wicked action. A created being that was entirely from God, with all the powers and faculties which belong it; that hath its continual subsistence in him, and all those powers continued and maintained by his influence every moment; that hath those powers made habile, and apt for whatsoever its most natural motions and operations, by a suitable influence whensoever it moves or operates; can this creature be said not to depend, as to all its motions and operations, unless it be also

unavoidably impelled to do every thing to which it is thus sufficiently enabled?

I again say, was it impossible to God to make such a creature that can, in this case, act or not act? It is here oddly enough said, that the author gives no demonstration hereof. Of what? Why, that it can never be proved (as the reference to the foregoing word shows) that it implies a contradiction, &c. It seems, it was expected that author should have proved by demonstration, that it can never be proved that it implies a contradiction for God to make a creature, which should be capable of acting (as he feigns him to have said) without immediate concurrence. By what rule of reasoning was he obliged to do so? But if the proving there is such a creature, as in the case before expressed, can act without determinative concurrence, will serve turn to prove that it cannot be proved it implies a contradiction there should be such a one, I may think the thing was done; and may think it sufficiently proved, that there is such a creature; if it appear (whereof there is too much proof) that there are such actions done by creatures, as for the reasons that were before alleged, it could not stand with the nature of God to determine them unto. And was nothing said tending to prove this, that it could not consist with the nature of God to determine men unto all the wicked actions they commit? It seems unless it were put into mood and figure, it is no proof. Nor was it the design of those papers to insist upon that subject; but there are things suggested *in transitu*, as such a discourse could admit, that, whether they are demonstrative or no, would puzzle a considering person:—that God should have as much influence and concurrence to the worst actions as to the best; as much or more than the sinner or the tempter; that the matter of his laws to Adam, and his posterity, should be a natural impossibility: and I now add, the irreconcilableness of that determination, with God's wisdom and sincerity, &c. These I shall reckon demonstrations, till I see them well answered.

However, if mine were a bad opinion, why was it not as confutable without the mention of Durandus? But that was, with him, an odious name; and fit, therefore, to impress the brand which he desired I should wear for his sake. This is

a likely way to clear the truth! Yet if it serve not one design, it will another, he thinks, upon which he was more intent. Are all for Durandus's way that are against a pre-determinative influence to wicked actions? I could tell him who have shown more strength in arguing against Durandus than I find in all his arguments, who have yet written, too, against determinative concurrence to such actions, more than ever he will be able to answer, or any man. The truth is, when I wrote that letter, I had never seen Durandus; nor indeed did I consult any book for the writing of it, (as I had not opportunity, if I had been so inclined,) except, upon some occasions, the Bible: not apprehending it necessary to number votes, and consider how many men's thoughts were one way, and how many the other, before I would adventure to think any of my own. But I have this day, upon the view of his animadversions, taken a view of Durandus too: and really cannot yet guess what should tempt him to parallel my conceptions with Durandus's, but that he took his for somewhat an ill-favoured name. Durandus flatly, in several places, denies God's immediate concurrence to the actions of the creatures;* which I never said nor thought; but do really believe his immediate concurrence to all actions of his creatures, both *immediatione virtutis* and *suppositi*, (that I may more comply with his scholastic humour, in the use of such terms, than gratify my own,) yet not determinative unto wicked actions.

Again, Durandus denies immediate concurrence, universally and upon such a ground as whereupon the denial must equally extend to good actions as to bad; viz., that it is impossible the same numerical action should be from two or more agents immediately and perfectly, except the same numerical virtue should be in each; but he says the same numerical virtue cannot be in God and in the creature, &c.† Whereas he well knows the concurrence or influence (for I here affect not the curiosity to distinguish these two terms, as some do) which I deny not to be immediate to any actions, I only deny to be determinative as to those which are wicked. Yea, and the authors he quotes,‡ Aquinas and Scotus, though every body

* L. ii. Disc. 1. Q. 5. D. 37. Q. 1. † Disc. 1, 2, 5, ut supra.

‡ Sect. xi.

may know they are against what was the notion of Durandus, yet are as much against himself, if he will directly oppose that letter, and assert determinative concurrence to wicked actions. They held immediate concurrence, not determinative. The former, though he supposes divine help in reference to the elections of the human will, yet asserts the elections themselves to be in man's own power, and only says that in the executions of those elections, men can be hindered; that (whatsoever influence he asserts of the first cause) men still, *habent se indifferenter ad benè vel malè eligendum*.^{*} The other, though he also excludes not the immediate efficacy of God in reference to the actions of men, yet is so far from making it determinative, that the reason he gives why, in evil actions, man sins and God does not, is that the one of those causes *posset rectitudinem dare actui quam tenetur dare: et tamen non dat. Alia autem, licèt non teneatur eam dare: tamen quantum est ex se daret, si voluntas creata co-operaretur*; † in the very place which himself refers to: wherein they differ from this author *toto cœlo*, and from me, in that they make not determinative influence necessary in reference to good actions, which I expressly do.

Thus far it may be seen what pretence or colour he had to make my opinion the same with Durandus's, or his own the same with that of Thomas and Scotus. But if he knew in what esteem I have the schoolmen, he would hardly believe me likely to step one foot out of my way, either to gain the reputation of any of their names, or avoid the disreputation. He, notwithstanding, supposed his own reputation to be so good (and I know no reason why he might not suppose so) as to make it be believed I was any thing he pleased to call me, by such as had not opportunity to be otherwise informed. And thus I would take leave of him, and permit him to use his own reflections upon his usage of me, at his own leisure; but that civility bids me (since he is pleased to be at the pains of catechising me) first to give some answer to the questions wherein he thus expostulates with me.

Q. 1. Whether there be any action of man on earth so good, which hath not some mixture of sin in it? And if God

^{*} 1 Q. 83.

† L. iii. Disc. 27. Q. 2.

concur to the substrate matter of it as good, must he not necessarily concur to the substrate matter as sinful? For is not the substrate matter of the act, both as good and sinful, the same?

A. 1. It seems, then, that God doth concur to the matter of an action as sinful. Which is honestly acknowledged, since by his principles it cannot be denied; though most of his way mince the business, and say the concurrence is only to the action which is sinful, not as sinful.

2. This I am to consider as an argument for God's predeterminative concurrence to wicked actions; and thus it must be conceived, that if God concur by determinative influence to the imperfectly good actions of faith, repentance, love to himself, prayer; therefore to the acts of enmity against himself, cursing, idolatry, blasphemy, &c. And is it not a mighty consequence? If to actions that are good *quoad substantiam*, therefore to such as are in the substance of them evil? We ourselves can, in a remoter kind, concur to the actions of others: because you may afford, yourself, your leading concurrence to actions imperfectly good, therefore may you to them that are downright evil? because to prayer, therefore to cursing and swearing? and then ruin men for the actions you induced them to? You will say, God may rather, but sure he can much less do so than you. How could you be serious in the proposal of this question?

We are at a loss how it should consist with the divine wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth, to design the punishing man, yet innocent, with everlasting torments, for actions which God, himself, would irresistibly move him to; whereas his making a covenant with Adam in reference to himself and his posterity, implied there was a possibility it might be kept; at least that he would not make the keeping of it, by his own positive influence, impossible. And you say, if he might concur to the substrate matter of an action as good, which tends to man's salvation and blessedness, he must necessarily concur (and that by an irresistible determinative influence, else you say nothing to me) to the substrate matter of all their evil actions, as evil, which tend to their ruin and misery, brought upon them by the ac-

tions which God makes them do. I suppose St. Luke, vi. 9, with Hos. xiii. 9, show a difference. If you therefore ask me, why I should not admit this consequence? I say it needs no other answer, than that I take wisdom, righteousness, goodness, and truth, to belong more to the idea of God, than their contraries.

Q. 2. Is there any action so sinful that hath not some natural good as the substrate matter thereof?

A. True. And what shall be inferred? That therefore God must, by a determinative influence, produce every such action whatsoever reason there be against it? You might better argue thence the necessity of his producing every hour, a new world; in which there would be a great deal more of positive entity, and natural goodness. Certainly, the natural goodness that is in the entity of an action, is no such invitation to the holy God, by determinative influence to produce it, as that he should offer violence to his own nature, and stain the justice and honour of his government, by making it be done, and then punish it being done.

Q. 3. Do we not cut off the most illustrious part of divine providence in governing the lower world, &c.?

A. What? by denying that it is the stated way of God's government, to urge men, irresistibly, to all that wickedness for which he will afterwards punish them with everlasting torments? I should least of all ever have expected such a question to this purpose, and am ashamed further to answer it. Only name any act of providence I hereby deny, if you can. In the next place, that my sense may appear in my own words; and that I may show how far I am of the same mind with those that apprehend me at so vast a distance from them, and where, if they go further, our parting point must be; I shall set down the particulars of my agreement with them, and do it in no other heads than they might have collected, if they had pleased, out of that letter. As,

1. That God exerciseth a universal providence about all his creatures, both in sustaining and governing them.

2. That, more particularly, he exerciseth such a providence about man.

3. That this providence about man extends to all the actions of all men.

4. That it consists not alone in beholding the actions of men, as if he were a mere spectator of them only, but is positively active about them.

5. That this active providence of God about all the actions of men consists not merely in giving them the natural powers, whereby they can work of themselves, but in a real influence upon those powers.

6. That this influence is in reference to holy and spiritual actions (whereto since the apostacy the nature of man is become viciously disinclined) necessary to be efficaciously determinative; such as shall overcome that disinclination, and reduce those powers into act.

7. That the ordinary, appointed way for the communication of this determinative influence, is by our intervening consideration of the inducements which God represents to us in his word, viz., the precepts, promises, and comminations, which are the moral instruments of his government. No doubt he may (as is intimated in the letter) extraordinarily act men in some rarer cases, by inward impulse, without the help of such external means, as he did prophets or inspired persons; and when he hath done so, we were not to think he treated them unagreeably to their natures, or so as their natures could not, without violence, admit. But it hath been the care and designment of the divine wisdom, so to order the way of dispensation towards the several sorts of creatures, as not only not, ordinarily, to impose upon them what they could not conveniently be patient of; but so as that their powers and faculties might be put upon the exercises whereof they were capable, and to provide that neither their passive capacity should be overcharged, nor their active be unemployed. And whereas the reasonable nature of man renders him not only susceptible of unexpected internal impressions, but also capable of being governed by laws, which require the use of his own endeavour to understand and obey them; and whereas we also find such laws are actually made for him, and propounded to him with their proper enforcements; if it should be the fixed course of God's government over him, only to guide him by inward impulses, this (as is said in that letter) would render those laws and their sanctions impertinencies; his faculties, whereby he is capable of

moral government so far, and to this purpose, useless and vain : and would be an occasion, which the depraved nature of men would be very apt to abuse into a temptation to them, never to bend their powers to the endeavour of doing any thing that were of a holy and spiritual tendency, (from which their aversion would be always prompting them to devise excuses,) more than a mere machine would apply itself to the uses which it was made for, and doth not understand.

Therefore lest any should be so unreasonable, as to expect God should only surprise them, while they resolutely sit still and sleep ; he hath, in his infinite wisdom, withheld from them the occasion hereof, and left them destitute of any encouragement (whatsoever his extraordinary dealings may have been with some) to expect his influences, in the neglect of his ordinary methods, as is discoursed already and at large in the letter ; and which is the plain sense of that admonition ; Phil. ii. 12, 13. Yea, and though there be never so many instances of merciful surprisals, preventive of all our own consideration and care, yet those are still to be accounted the ordinary methods which are so *de jure*, which would actually be so if men did their duty, and which God hath obliged us to observe and attend unto as such.

8. That in reference to all other actions which are not sinful, though there be not a sinful disinclination to them, yet because there may be a sluggishness and ineptitude to some purposes God intends to serve by them, this influence is also always determinative thereunto, whensoever to the immense wisdom of God shall seem meet, and conducing to his own great and holy ends.

9. That, in reference to sinful actions, by this influence God doth not only sustain men who do them, and continue to them their natural faculties and powers, whereby they are done ; but also, as the first mover, so far excite and actuate those powers, as that they are apt and habile for any congenerous action, to which they have a natural designation, and whereto they are not sinfully disinclined.

10. That, if men do then employ them to the doing of any sinful action ; by that same influence, he doth, as to him seems meet, limit, moderate, and, against the inclination and design of the sinful agent, overrule and dispose it to good.

But now if, besides all this, they will also assert, that God doth, by an efficacious influence, move and determine men to wicked actions; this is that which I most resolvedly deny. That is, in this I shall differ with them, that I do not suppose God to have, by internal influence, as far a hand in the worst and wickedest actions, as in the best. I assert more to be necessary to actions to which men are wickedly disinclined; but that less will suffice for their doing of actions to which they have inclination more than enough. I reckon it sufficient to the production of this latter sort of actions, that their powers be actually habile, and apt for any such action, in the general, as is connatural to them; supposing there be not a peccant aversion, as there is to all those actions that are holy and spiritual; which aversion a more potent (even a determinative) influence is necessary to overcome. I explain myself by instance:—

A man hath from God the powers belonging to his nature, by which he is capable of loving or hating an apprehended good or evil. These powers being, by a present divine influence, rendered habile and apt for action, he can now love a good name, health, ease, life; and hate disgrace, sickness, pain, death; but he doth also by these powers, thus habilitated for action, love wickedness and hate God; I say, now, that to those former acts God should over and besides determine him, is not absolutely and always necessary; and to the latter is impossible. But that to hate wickedness universally, and as such, and to love God, the depravedness of his nature, by the apostacy, hath made the determinative influence of efficacious grace necessary. Which, therefore, he hath indispensable obligation (nor is destitute of encouragement) earnestly to implore and pray for. My meaning is now plain to such as have a mind to understand it.

Having thus given an account wherein I agree with them, and wherein, if they please, I must differ; it may perhaps be expected I should add further reasons of that difference on my part: but I shall for the present forbear to do it. I know it may be alleged that some very pious as well as learned men have been of their opinion; and I seriously believe it. But that signifies nothing to the goodness of the opinion; nor doth the badness of it extinguish my charity

nor reverence towards the men. For I consider, that as many hold the most important truths, and which most directly tend to impress the image of God upon their souls, that yet are never stamped with any such impression thereby; so, it is not impossible some may have held very dangerous opinions, with a notional judgment, the pernicious influence whereof hath never distilled upon their hearts. Neither shall I be willing, without necessity, to detect other men's infirmities: yet if I find myself any way obliged further to intermeddle in this matter, I reckon the time I have to spend in this world can never be spent to better purpose, than in discovering the fearful consequences of that rejected opinion, the vanity of the subterfuges whereby its assertors think to hide the malignity of it, and the inefficacy of the arguments brought for it; especially those two which the letter takes notice of. For, as so ill-coloured an opinion ought never to be admitted without the most apparent necessity, so do I think it most apparent there is no necessity it should be admitted upon those grounds, or any other; and doubt not but that both the governing providence of God, in reference to all events whatsoever, and his most certain knowledge of them all, may be defended, against all opposers, without it. But I had rather my preparations to these purposes should be buried in dust and silence, than I should ever see the occasion which should carry the signification with it of their being at all needful. And I shall take it for a just and most deplorable occasion, if I shall find any to assert against me the contradictory to this proposition:—That God doth not by an efficacious influence, universally move and determine men to all their actions; even those that are most wicked:—which is the only true and plain meaning of what was said, about this business, in the before-mentioned letter.

REMARKS
UPON A
LATE DISINGENUOUS DISCOURSE.
WRIT BY ONE T. D.
UNDER
THE PRETENCE "DE CAUSA DEI," AND OF ANSWERING
MR. JOHN HOWE'S LETTER AND POSTSCRIPT
OF GOD'S PRESCIENCE, ETC.
BY ANDREW MARVELL.

PREFATORY NOTICE.

ANDREW MARVELL, the friend of Milton, an incorruptible patriot, in most venal times, and perhaps the wittiest prose writer in the English language, was the son of a learned and pious Puritan minister of the same name, master of the Grammar school, and lecturer of Trinity church, in Kingston-upon-Hull. He was born in 1620, sent to Cambridge at the expense of the corporation of his native city in 1635, and entered student of Trinity college. When at the university, an attempt was made to convert him to Popery, the ultimate result of which seems to have been a deepening his impressions of the falsehood and mischievousness of that system. In 1640 he was deprived of his father, who lost his life in rather remarkable circumstances, on crossing the Humber. For a number of years he seems to have been engaged in travelling over the Continent of Europe. In 1653, he was engaged by Cromwell to superintend the education at Eton of his nephew,—a young gentleman of the name of Dutton; and in 1657 he became assistant to Milton in the office of Latin secretary, which he held till the restoration. In 1660 he was chosen one of the representatives of the borough of Hull in the House of Commons, in which situation he was so acceptable and useful to his constituents that he continued to occupy it as long as he lived. Besides the poems attributed to him, *some* of which are of high merit, he published a variety of tracts in prose, all of them occasional. His most celebrated work is, “The Rehearsal Transposed,” written in opposition to the infamous Samuel Parker, afterwards Bishop of Norwich. This little book, in two parts, with a profusion of witty sarcasm, contains much solid argument and eloquent writing, and may justly be reckoned one of the ablest exposures of the maxims of religious tyranny. It extorted high praise even from Swift, no friend to its principles. He died

in 1678, and the corporation of Hull, in gratitude for his long and faithful services, voted a sum of money to defray his funeral expenses, and erect a monument to his memory in the church of St. Giles-in-the-fields, London.

The following is a list of his prose publications so far as they can be ascertained, for most of them were published anonymously. "The Rehearsal Transposed, or Animadversions upon a late book intituled, A Preface, shewing what grounds there are of fears and jealousies of Popery. London. Printed by A. B., for the assigns of John Calvin and Theodore Beza, at the sign of the King's Indulgence, on the south side of the Lake Lemane. 1672." "The Rehearsal Transposed. The second part: Occasioned by two letters, answered by Andrew Marvell. London. 1673." "Mr. Smirke, or the Divine in Mode, being certain Annotations upon the Animadversions on "the naked truth," together with a short historical essay concerning general councils, creeds, and impositions in matters of religion, by Andreas Rivetus, Junior. Anag. Res Nuda Veritas. Printed A.D. 1676." "A Seasonable Question and an Useful Answer, by Andrew Marvell. Printed in the year 1676." "An Account of the growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England, by Andrew Marvell. Printed at Amsterdam in the year 1677." "A Seasonable Argument to persuade all the grand juries of England to petition for a new parliament, by Andrew Marvell. Amsterdam. Printed in the year 1677." The completest edition of Marvell's works is that by Captain Edward Thompson, in 3 vols. 4to; and the best account of his life is that written by Hartley Coleridge.

The Tract that follows has never been included in any edition of Marvell's works, though its merits well entitle it to such a place, and its authenticity is indisputable. In Marvell's day it was unhesitatingly ascribed to him. Calamy, speaking of the tract to which it is a reply, says, "Mr. Danson wrote against this tract, but I know not that Mr. Howe took any notice of him; though the ingenious Andrew Marvell, Esq., made a very witty and entertaining reply to him." "The point, however," as Mr. Rogers in his life of Howe well observes, "would be sufficiently clear, even if this testimony were wanting. The internal evidence alone would decide it. None who are in the slightest degree acquainted with Andrew Marvell's peculiar vein of humour can mistake any

half-dozen pages as the composition of any other author." Mr. Howe's admirable tract, which occupies the first place in this volume, was attacked from various quarters. The learned but by no means judicious Gale inserted some animadversions on it in the last part of his "Court of the Gentiles." To these Howe replied in a Postscript to his treatise. His other two assailants were non-conformist ministers, both of whom attached only their initials to their performances;—the one John Troughton, and the other Thomas Danson, an intimate friend and fellow-collegiate of Howe's. The full title of Danson's work is "DE CAUSA DEI; or a Vindication of the Common Doctrine of Protestant Divines concerning Predetermination, viz. The Interest of God, as the first cause in all the actions as such of rational creatures, from the invidious consequences with which it is burdened by Mr. John Howe, in a late Letter and Postscript of God's Prescience, by T. D. 1678."—The following Tract is intrinsically valuable, but it has the additional recommendation of rareness in an uncommon degree. As the only copy known to be in existence belongs to Dr. Williams' Library, Red Cross Street, London, it seems highly desirable that it should be placed beyond the hazard of being entirely lost.

REMARKS

UPON A

LATE DISINGENUOUS DISCOURSE, ETC.

OF all vocations to which men addict themselves, or are dedicated, I have always esteemed that of the ministry to be the most noble and happy employment; as being more peculiarly directed to those two great ends, the advancement of God's glory, and the promoting of man's salvation. It hath seemed to me as if they who have chosen, and are set apart for that work, did, by the continual opportunity of conversing with their Maker, enjoy a state like that of Paradise; and in this superior, that they are not also, as Adam, put in "to dress and keep a garden;" but are, or ought to be, exempt from the necessity of all worldly avocations. Yet, upon nearer consideration, they likewise appear to partake of the common infelicities of human condition. For, although they do not, as others, eat their bread in the sweat of their brows (which some divines account to be, though in the pulpit, indecent), yet the study of their brain is more than equivalent; and even the theological ground is so far under the curse, that no field runs out more in thorns and thistles, or requires more pains to disencumber it. Such I understand to be those peevish questions which have overgrown Christianity; wherewith men's minds are not only rent and entangled, but from whence they can no more hope for any wholesome nourishment, than to "gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles." And, if I may so far pursue the allegory, this curse upon divinity, as that upon the earth, seems to

have proceeded also from tasting that forbidden fruit, of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil.” For, in general, many divines, out of a vain affectation of learning, have been tempted into inquiries too curious, after those things which the wisdom of God hath left impervious to human understanding, further than they are revealed. And hence, instead of those allowed and obvious truths of faith, repentance, and the new creature, (yet these too have their proper weeds that pester them,) there have sprung up endless disputes concerning the unsearchable things of God, and which are agitated by men, for the most part, with such virulence and intricacy, as manifest the subtilty and malice of the serpent that hath seduced them. But, more particularly, that very knowledge of good and evil, the disquisition of the causes from whence, and in what manner they are derived, hath been so grateful to the controversial *female* appetite, that even the divines have taken of it as “a fruit to be desired to make them wise,” and given to their people, and they have both eaten, at the peril of God’s displeasure and their own happiness. Whereas, that second chapter of Genesis contains the plain history of good and evil, and (not to mention so many attestations to it of the Old and New Testaments) what other comment needs there, for what belongs to good, than that, James i. 17, that it is from God only, “that every good giving, and every perfect gift descendeth?” And, as to evil, that also of St. James is sufficient conviction, ch. i. 13, 14, “Let no man say, when he is tempted, I was tempted of God; God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside by his own lusts and enticed.” Or that of the same apostle, ch. iv. 1, “From whence come wars and fightings among you?” (and even that *logomachia*, I fear, with which this question is vexed,) “Come they not hence? even from your lusts that fight in your members.” And there is no examining Christian but must find both these truths evidently witnessed by his own conscience.

Nevertheless, the theologants of former and later times, not content with what is held forth in Scripture, have attempted to clamber and palm up higher, by the philosophy of that school where each of them hath first practised, and

have drawn God's prescience and predetermination upon this occasion, into debate; arguing upon such points as no man, unless he were *prior* and precedent to the First Cause, can have the understanding to comprehend and judge of: and most of them do but say and unsay; and while in words they all deny God to be the author of sin, yet in effect, and by the manner of their reasoning, they affirm it; I therefore, being both apprehensive of the danger in such arguments, and more particularly conscious of mine own weakness, shall not presume to interpose my opinion in the differences about this matter, further than to say,—That if men by this fancied “opening of their eyes,” have attained to see more clearly, and acknowledge the wickedness of their own actions, it resembles the modesty of our first parents, discerning their “nakedness:” but, if men shall also assert a *predeterminative* *concourse* of God to our evil, it seems to have too much of original perverseness, and of that fallen shortness of reason, whereby they would have found a nudity in the Creator, and did implicitly reject their fault upon him, for the “serpent that he had made,” and the “woman that he had given.”

But if any man there be that can reconcile this controversy, and so many more that arise out of it; (for all the most important doctrines of Christianity serve on the one side, and all the fiercest questions of religion on the other, depending for truth and falsehood upon the success of this engagement,) if he can extinguish all those ill consequences, dull distinctions, and inconsistent notions, which have been levied in this quarrel, and reduce each party within the due limits of Scripture and saving knowledge; such a person indeed deserves all commendation. And such an one I thought I had met with, nor yet see reason, notwithstanding all the late attempts upon him, to alter my opinion; in a book entitled, “The Reconcilableness of God's Prescience of the sins of Men, with the Wisdom and Sincerity of his Counsels, Exhortations, and whatsoever other means He uses to prevent them; in a Letter to the Honourable Robert Boyle, Esquire;” and in a “Postscript to the late Letter of the Reconcilableness of God's Prescience, &c., by John Howe, the Author of that Letter.”

Yet there was one passage in the close of his “Letter,” p.

58, which seemed, as I thought, to lie open to censure: where he asked pardon, as "having huddled it up mostly in the intervals of a troublesome long journey." It seemed a piece too well elaborate to have been perfected amidst the hurry of the road, the noise of inns, and the nausea of the packet-boat. And how could he hope, after saying this, in so captious an age as we live, to escape some reflexion? but that at least men would inquire whether he went by stage-coach, or on horseback; both which are professed enemies to meditation and judgment? (for it is probable he had not that ancient accommodation of horse-litters, wherein, without any impediment to their thoughts, men travelled with all the privacy and equipage of a closet,) whether he had not lost his way or fallen among thieves, and how he found himself after his journey? with all the questions that men are subject to at their arrival home, and which even when asked in civility, yet are troublesome. He might, had it not been for the jogging, have remembered how unfortunate most writers have been in such excuses, and what advantage ill-natured men have taken to misinterpret them. So he that apologised for using a foreign tongue was told, that no man had prohibited him his native language in his own country. Others, alleging that they had at the same time a fit of the stone, gout, or other distemper, have been taxed, as lying under no obligation of publishing their infirmities, but who might, however, have cured themselves of that of writing. And he that pretended to treat at once of a serious, while he was amused with "a more comfortable importance," was advertised, that he ought therefore to have so long abstained either from the one or the other.* But, in earnest, this confession of Mr. Howe's is so far from any such arrogance, that it rather argues his modesty. For, if some can even in riding name all the contrary motions, till they have by memory played out a game at chess (which was first invented as an emblem of *predetermination*), why should it be more difficult, or less allowable, to one of Mr. Howe's abilities, in the interruptions of travel, to give a mate also to that question? The worst therefore that can be said of him, in allusion either

* A reference to "the Rehearsal Transposed."

to his "Letter" or his journey, is—"at poterat tutior esse domi." Yet seeing this was the greatest fault that I remarked in reading him over, I would not pass it by without notice, lest I might have cause to suspect myself of a partiality, which I desire not that others should exercise in mine own particular.

But for the rest, whereas the things considerable in all discourses are the subject, the end, the reasoning, the method, and the style; I must profess, that as far as I understand, I have met with few manual treatises, that do in all these respects equal it. For the subject, it appears in the title; than which there was none of greater dignity to be handled, or of greater use, if rightly explained and comprehended. And no less is that of *predetermination*, which he only treats of collaterally; and upon which therefore, in hope to find him less prepared, he hath been attacked, as in the flank, with most vigour. His end was most commendable, being to make the paths straight, and remove those stumbling-blocks which the asperity of others had laid in the way to heaven; to rectify men's apprehensions concerning God, and leave them without pretence for negligence in their duties, or despair of performance; much less for despite against the Creator. His arguing then is plain and solid, for evidence, rather than dispute; nor does he either throw the dust of antique distinctions in the eyes of his readers, to blind them; or yet raise the spectres of ancient authors, or conjure their venerable names, to frighten men out of their senses and understanding; but declares against all the prejudice or advantage by such proceeding, as unlawful charms, and prohibited weapons in the controversy. His method thereafter is direct and coherent, his style perspicuous and elegant: so that it is, in short, a manly discourse, resembling much, and expressing the human perfection; in the harmony of language, the symmetry of parts, the strength of reason, the excellency of its end, which is so serious, that it is no defect in the similitude with man, that the Letter contains nothing in it suitable to the property of laughter.

All which put together, and although it does, and must everywhere partake also of human imperfection, it might have been hoped capable of that civility which men, and

especially learned men, but most of all divines, do usually, or should allow, to one another. That it should not be made ridiculous, being writ in so good earnest; nor assaulted, being so inoffensive; much less that it should be defaced, mutilated, stabbed in so many places, and the author through it, which is even in writing a kind of felony. Yet this hath been its misfortune in a rencounter with an immodest and hectoring discourse, pretending to the title, “De Causa Dei: or a Vindication of the Common Doctrine of Protestant Divines concerning *Predetermination*, viz. The Interest of God, as the First Cause, in all the Actions, as such, of Rational Creatures, from the Invidious Consequences with which it is burthened, by Mr. John Howe, in a late Letter and Postscript of God’s Prescience; by T. D.” By which first letters, seeing it appears that he desires to pass incognito, I will so far observe good manners, as to interpret them only “The Discourse,” heartily wishing that there were some way of finding *it* guilty, without reflecting upon the author; which I shall accordingly endeavour, that I may both preserve his, whatsoever, former reputation, and leave him a door open to ingenuity for the future. But The Discourse justifies itself as if it had been typified by Paul’s withstanding Peter to his face, when he came to Antioch, (so easy is it to patronise human passions under pretence of the cause of God, and apostolical example) T. D. p. 23. whereas it rather resembles in the bravery, though not in the occasion, that exploit of Peter’s, Matt. xxvi. 51, 52, for which our Saviour, though done in his defence, rebuked him; adding, “They that take the sword, shall perish by the sword:” and the taking the pen hath seldom better success, if handled in the same manner. I therefore, having had the leisure to read it over, and thereby the opportunity of a second caution, how the unruly quill is to be managed, have thought that I could not at present render a better account of that time to myself or others, than by publishing these remarks; that, as Mr. Howe’s Letter may serve for a pattern of what is to be imitated, so The Discourse may remain as a mark (the best use it can be put to) of what ought to be avoided in all writing of controversies, especially by divines, in those that concern religion. The nature of this matter would admit of no better method,

than that the errors observable should be distinguished under several heads, to each of which the particular instances are referred. The first article that I prefer against The Discourse, is;

Its trifling and cavilling about words, when they affect not the cause.

First instance. Mr. Howe, on purpose to prevent any such idle practice, had, in the last page of his Postscript, plainly summed up the constant sense both of that and his Letter which he would abide by: "That God doth not by an efficacious influence universally move and determine men to all their actions, even those actions which are most wicked." Here was the subject ready stated, against which, if any thing, The Discourse ought to have directly applied. But instead of that T. D. p. 1. *it* saith, "Mr. Howe gives us his sense in various terms, and such as seem repugnant to each other. One while that which he denies, is a *predeterminative concurrence*, and *predeterminative concurrence*; another while, it is *predetermining influence*, and a *determinative influence*, and *efficacious influence*." This is the same in T. D. as if *its* "concurrent wherry-men," p. 27, after they had taken in their fare, should be long pulling off their doublets, and then carry a man to another stairs than they were directed. The one shows that they had but little heart to their labour; the other, that they know not the river, unless perhaps they have a design, if they can find a place convenient, to rifle the passenger. For Mr. Howe had expressly pitched upon that one term of efficacious influence. But as for those other repeated by The Discourse, they were such as Mr. Howe found in the controversy, not of his own making, nor therefore is he accountable for them: but, however, it was his ingenuity to mention them; and having done so, to bind himself to a point, to one word of the most certain signification, as a place where any adversary might always be sure to speak with him. Yet *it*, to find out matter for discourse, and to show *its* great reading, tells us, as if that were the business, what Strangius saith, and what Dr. Twisse, concerning *predetermination* and *concurrence*; and again what Strangius, of

the difference between *concourse* and *influence*, p. 2. and saith that, "as for those two phrases, *predeterminative concurrence*, and *predeterminative concourse*, they are in effect *contradictio in adjecto*." And so let them be, upon condition that not Mr. Howe, (as The Discourse would have it) but the first inventor may be bound to answer for it. For the truth is, the brothers of dispute do usually so handle their matter, and refine so far, till they want at last either words to express their meaning, or meaning to express in words. And so it hath fared with these imaginers of the *predeterminative concourse* or *concurrence*. It is very well that this scene of debate lies in Oxford (or London), for, upon these terms, it would be impossible at Newmarket, where *Præ* and *Con* run their heats, to decide any match without sending for a judge to the next university; and it is less difficult for *Pro* and *Con*, or for *Con* and *Non-con*, to set their horses together. Yet suppose, as The Discourse affirms, that this *predeterminative concourse*, or *concurrence* had been words of Mr. Howe's own choosing; whereas he on the contrary rejects them for that of *efficacious influence*, the impropriety however therein had not been greater, than of that phrase which T. D. p. 25. uses, and hath right to, *simultaneous concourse*, which is, if I mistake not, as much as to say, *conconcourse*.

The same (if greater be the same) "trifling and cavilling about words that affect not the cause," it is to say, T. D. p. 2. "As for that latter phrase, *influence*, which Mr. Howe makes equipollent with the former *concourse* in these words, Post. p. 67. 'I here affect not the curiosity to distinguish these two terms, as some do;' I had rather he should hear Strangius again than me, blaming his not affecting 'that curiosity of distinction,' and then *it* cites Strangius de Vol. Dei, lib. i. c. 2. p. 59., assigning the difference between them. This is a trivial litigation about words, where the thing intended is sufficiently understood (or rather is intelligible), and, whether it be said *influence* or *concourse* makes no more to the business, than the impropriety objected to *predetermining* or *previous concourse*, which any indifferent reader can see to have been spoken generally, of a priority of the supposed *influence* on God's part, not in time, but in nature and cau-

sality. Strangius, indeed, writing a large treatise concerning that subject, distinguished all the terms more accurately: but Mr. Howe, it being there done to his hand, and writing on the by only two or three pages, had not the space or the occasion to enlarge upon them. And it is an infirmity which Mr. Howe, I observe, is much subject to, that he seldom useth any notional terms or distinctions, where he can make men comprehend him better without them; and at that indeed he hath a singular faculty. His very saying that he “affected not, there, the *curiosity* to distinguish those two terms, as some do,” shows it; but withal, that he was not ignorant of them, and that he also could distinguish when he saw reason, and in time and place convenient. The Discourse might with more cause have accused him of ambiguity, and raised scruples about his *curiosity*; for that is taken in many several significations. As for example, sometimes it is used for a commendable exquisiteness in things considerable, and worth the labour. Otherwhiles it is described, “*Quoties plus diligentiae quam oportebat impendimus rebus, vel nostris, vel alienis. Nostris, quum minima quæque disquirimus et nullius frugis: alienis, quum de rebus cæterorum occultioribus non satis cum pudore perscrutamur aut interrogamus.*” So not Strangius, nor Doctor Twisse, but Cicero. Which that I may do equal right to The Discourse in translating Latin, is to say, “That is called *curiosity*, when men use an impertinent diligence in things relating to themselves or others: to themselves, when they are busy about every trifle, and what is of no moment: to others, when they exercise a scrutiny, or ask questions beyond modesty, concerning their private affairs.” And I had rather *it* should hear Cicero again, “than me blaming” *it* for this latter sort of *curiosity*: “*Reperiam multos, vel innumerabiles potius, non tam curiosos, nec tam molestos quam vos estis.*” That is, ‘I could find many or rather innumerable men, neither so *troublesome* nor so *curious* as *you* are.’ And Quintilian explains it further: “*Est etiam quæ parergia vocatur, supervacua, ut sic dixerim, operositas: ut a diligente curiosus, et a religione superstitio distat,*” that is, ‘There is also that which is called *parergia*, a superfluous and laborious nicety; as a *curious* man differs from a diligent, or superstition from religion.’ But besides all this, *curiosus* signifies

an informer: in which sense, I suppose, both Mr. Howe and T. D. would be loath to accept it. Yet perhaps I may gratify them in the authority or quotation. *Suet. Aug. c. 27.* "Nam et *pinarium* equitem Romanum, quam concionante se admissa turba paganorum, apud milites, subscribere quædam animadvertisset, *curiosum* et speculatorem ratus, coram confodi imperavit." Which text, if a little helped in the translating, might serve them to notable purpose: 'but however so it is, that taking the knight to be a spy and an informer, he caused him forthwith to be slain in his presence.' And lastly in the code, *Tit. de Curiosis et Stationariis*: *curiosus* is a postmaster, if Mr. Howe be disposed at any time to take another "long troublesome journey," and do not "disaffect also that curiosity." It had been much more to the purpose to have learned these several acceptations of curiosity, than to have exercised it in the worst sense, in such needless disquisitions, when a question stated in other terms was in expectation every minute to be disputed.

But to say that in those words, "I here affect not the *curiosity* to distinguish these two terms of *concourse* or *influence*, as some do," was to make the latter phrase "influence *equipollent* with the former *concourse*," is gratis, or rather *ingratius dictum*, and ought not to have been but upon consultation first with Mr. Howe, to have had his concurrence; no nor then neither. For should Mr. Howe be never so much of opinion, as he seems otherwise, that they are *equipollent*, yet it can never be true that these words do infer it. As suppose that I should say, 'I affect not *here* the *curiosity* to distinguish betwixt the candour and the acuteness of The Discourse in this particular,' do I therefore think them *equipollent*, or that one of them hath not the stronger ingredience? though indeed there is little of either.

Another (for this hath been too pregnant to say a second) instance to the same head is where The Discourse, p. 26. tells us; "It is an unaccountable inadvertency, (for to salve his honour, so I will call it, rather than a slip of judgment,) to produce cursing and swearing for instances of actions downright, or for the substance of them evil," &c. This indeed is *curiosity* in the highest degree of perfection, if (for I must be aware too of such exactness) there be degrees of perfec-

tion. And a heavy charge it is, which I know not whence it could light upon Mr. Howe, but that the curious are likewise given for the most part to be censorious, where they have no reason. For Mr. Howe, Post. pp. 68, 69, examining an argument used by some for God's predeterminative concurrence to wicked actions, because there are no actions of man on earth so good, which have not some mixture of sin in them, &c. saith, "This argument must be thus conceived: that if God *concur* by *determinative influence* to the imperfectly good actions of faith, repentance, love to himself, prayer; therefore to the acts of *enmity* against himself, cursing, idolatry, blasphemy, &c. And is it not a mighty consequence, if to actions that are good *quoad substantiam*, therefore to such as are in the substance of them evil? We ourselves can in a remoter kind concur to the actions of others. Because you may afford yourself your leading concurrence to actions imperfectly good, therefore may you to them that are downright evil? because to prayer, therefore to cursing and swearing? and then ruin men for the actions you induced them to? You will say, God may rather, but sure he can much less do so than you. How could you be serious in the proposal of this question?" For this argument had been proposed by way of question, and I have on purpose set down Mr. Howe's answer at length, that it might be evident, without further brangling, how little, I mean how no, cause there was for this animadversion upon him, speaking expressly of such cursing and swearing only as is evil *quoad substantiam*. For certainly those "acts of enmity against God himself," which Mr. Howe there enumerates, cursing, and then idolatry, blasphemy, &c. are, and were so understood by him, and by all but such as take care to the contrary, as much evil in themselves as that adultery which The Discourse itself owns to be so, p. 72. "because no end or circumstance can make it good." So that this ado is made for Mr. Howe's not saying profane cursing and swearing: indeed a very heinous and notorious omission; even as it would be for a man, so often as he uses the words *and* or *the*, not to distinguish or tell his reader, that he intends *and* in an *exegetical* sense, or *the* in an *emphatical*; or whether in their ordinary capacity. How "unaccountable soever this inadvertency" were in Mr. Howe, it is well

The Discourse did not call our Saviour to account, Matt. v. 34, for forbidding swearing in general terms, nor St. James, v. 12, for the same as to swearing, or ch. iii. 9, 10, because the same apostle does not there descant upon cursing more distinctly, and add profane to its character. But had The Discourse done so, it would have been obvious to every man, that the pen deserved the same brand which is set upon the tongue in that chapter. I wonder how in this lyncean perspicacity *it* oversaw a more remarkable error of Mr. Howe's about "actions in their substance evil;" where in the same page, 69, he writes *qoad* substantiam*, which could not be Mr. Howe's inadvertency; for in that paragraph he also spells *consequence* and *gestion* in the like manner, and therefore must by the same consequence as that of cursing and swearing, have been a slip of his judgment. But, had *it* continued to be so unmercifully accurate, Mr. Howe might perhaps have told *it* its own; where p. 27. *it* mentions that "evil act of Adam's eating a tree" (for I see we are all mortal), which is a phrase of very hard digestion. Other proofs of this head I reserve till further occasion, two or three instances upon each, being like so many witnesses sufficient for *its* conviction. The second article follows.

Its ignorance and confusion about the matter that is in controversy.

First instance. The Discourse, p. 3. saith: "The ambiguity of Mr. Howe's phrases removed, and the sense of them being brought to a certainty, I assert the contradictory to his proposition: the term *efficacious* suiting well enough, if Mr. Howe intend by it an infallibility of the event, or the certain production of those actions which God hath an influence upon." Now, for the better understanding of this, it is fit to observe that Mr. Howe's proposition is this: "God doth not by an efficacious influence universally move and determine men to all their actions, even those actions that are most wicked." They that assert the contradictory, must therefore affirm that

* It was not uncommon about the time this tract was written to write *q* instead of *qu*. Gataker does so uniformly.—ED.

God does: and much good may it do them. But The Discourse, in the words before cited, capitulates that Mr. Howe should by *efficacious* intend *infallibility*, &c. It might almost as well have said *transubstantiation*, which we shall meet with, p. 35. hereafter.

Now it is indeed fit that a respondent should gratify his opponent as far as may consist with civility and safety. But here arises a case of conscience; whether a man may give another leave, that desires it, to speak nonsense. I say no. For nonsense and idle words are of the same notion. But if he be one that I have no power over, and whom I can by no amicable means hinder from speaking nonsense, I, after having used all good endeavours, am excused. But here the case is stronger, where one shall not only take the liberty himself, but oblige me too to speak nonsense. To this I say, that to the best of my understanding, I never will, nor ought to do it in respect to any man. Yet no less a favour, or favours, doth The Discourse demand of Mr. Howe, in requiring that the term *efficacious* may be expounded by *infallibility*, that is, in effect, the most potent influence by no influence; for what influence hath *infallibility* upon the actions of another, or upon anything? And this, if it should yet obtain it of Mr. Howe, yet would consist as ill with his own following words, or *certain production*; wherein he more than implies that *infallibility* and *certain production* are all one: whereas a man may certainly and infallibly know what he never produces, and some too, we see, produce what they never understand. But if The Discourse shall still opiniatre in this matter, let it, to try how well it suits, strike *efficacious*, for experiment, out of the question, and insert instead of it *infallibility* and *certain production*, and then see if there be any sense in it or grammar.

Second instance. The Discourse, p. 9. pretends to give a definition of predetermination. Predetermination, it saith, "is thus defined; A transient action of God, which excites every creature to act." Now it is generally known, that the two most perfect creatures in all logic, are a demonstration and a definition. How good The Discourse is at the first shall afterwards be demonstrated. But as to a definition, it always consists, as being a dialectic animal, of a body,

which is the *genus*, and a *difference*, which is the soul of the thing defined; but this will in neither of these appear to be perfect or rational. For the *genus* here is action, and yet a few lines below *it* saith, that “predetermination is to be conceived of *per modum principii*, under the notion of a principle, or cause of the creatures acting, but concur only *per modum actionis*.” Predetermination was but even before under the *genus* of action, and now of cause; so that The Discourse hath been very liberal indeed of body to the definition, having given it two rather than fail, though commonly we account such births to be errors of nature and monstrous. Had The Discourse interposed some pages, it might have only argued a default of memory; but this inconsistency at one sight, and before *its* pen could be taken off, shows that defect not to have been, as with some persons, recompensed in judgment. And then for the difference that is assigned in this definition, it happens here, as usually where there is most body, that there is least soul. For there is nothing else left to be the difference, but, “whereby God excites every creature to act.” If this be all, The Discourse might indeed very well say, p. 7. that Mr. Howe would “be forced to grant predetermination;” for how could he possibly avoid it, when the antagonist defines it in Mr. Howe’s own words? who saith, Postscript, p. 72. “In reference to sinful actions; by this influence God doth not only sustain men who do them, and continue to them their natural faculties and powers whereby they are done; but also, as the first mover, so far *excites* and actuates those powers, as that they are apt and habile for any congenerous action, to which they have a natural designation, and whereto they are not sinfully disinclined.” Whereby “God excites the creature to act,” saith The Discourse; whereby “God excites and actuates those powers to,” &c., saith Mr. Howe very fully here, and in all other places to the same sense; so that if The Discourse either understood Mr. Howe or *itself*, either *its* own definition, or the common question, what place was there left for arguing, unless to debate for debate’s sake? Usually when both parties say the same thing, there is an end of the discourse, but however of the dispute: there is, as far as I see, no doubt to be made but Mr. Howe, as he hath, will grant this predetermination even

without "being forced," but yet upon condition, and it is but reasonable that The Discourse will retract *its* own foregoing words, p. 5. "This act of God is called predetermination, because it limits the creature to this action rather than to that." This indeed will serve The Discourse for argument either of discourse or dispute with *itself*, being definition in effect against definition to prevent monstrosity, supplying hereby two souls to the two bodies. But till *it* be better agreed with *it*, and can come to a clearer understanding with *itself*, no third person needs or can be interested in the contest further than as a spectator of some strange sight for his money, like the double child from Sussex.

Third instance. The Discourse cites Mr. Howe, Postscript, p. 71. for having there said concerning "God's exciting man to act" those foregoing words that I come last from mentioning. But those words are not p. 71, but 72., and the mistake in the citation is probably an error only of the printer's. Though indeed in that p. 71. Mr. Howe with much perspicuity declares the same sense and opinion which he gives in other expressions, p. 72. For p. 71. he saith, "It hath been the care and designment of the divine wisdom so to order the way of dispensation towards the several sorts of creatures, as not only not, ordinarily, to impose upon them what they could not be patient of, but so as that their powers and faculties might be put upon the exercises whereof they were capable, and to provide that neither their passive capacity should be overcharged, nor their active be unemployed." But the words repeated and excepted against are to be found in his p. 72. and upon them it is that The Discourse fixes this unreasonable and ill interpretation and censure; "If by exciting and actuating the powers he means that God reduces them to act, he hath taken a large jump from Durandus to Twisse:" and so goes on to prove that ill-favoured and worse conceived suggestion. It ought sufficiently to have prevented this usage that Mr. Howe's Letter, p. 23. hath said, "That which hath too apparently had greatest actual efficacy with many in asserting predetermination, hath been the authority of this or that man of reputation, and the force of that art of imputing a doctrine already under a prejudicial doom to some or other ill-reputed former

writer, I profess not to be skilled in the use of that sort of weapons." And therefore, not being himself the aggressor, but challenged and defied by another, he ought to have had the choice of them. What signifies Durandus here, but to call a man ill names instead of coming to the point? and what Dr. Twisse, but to wear mail, or bring a second when Mr. Howe comes naked and single? It is not what this or that man, but what truth saith, that is to be regarded; what liberty soever The Discourse here takes to the contrary. It can by no means be made true, that Mr. Howe by these words, "God as the first mover so far excites and actuates those powers, as that they are apt and habile for any congenerous action," professes himself of Dr. Twisse's opinion, no more than that he is of Durandus's after having thus declared his own as clearly as it is possible for any man's meaning to be minuted or explained. For Durandus holds only a mere conservation of the faculty, Dr. Twisse a predetermination. But Mr. Howe, to avoid Durandus on the one hand, saith, "that in reference to sinful actions (for of these is the question) God doth not only sustain men who do them, and continue to them their natural faculties and powers," (which was all Durandus pretended to,) "but also so far excites and actuates those powers, as that they are apt and habile for any congenerous action," &c., whereas, if he would have spoke with Dr. Twisse, he must have said, 'but also excites and actuates those powers *determinately* to this or that action,' which would have differed the whole breadth of heaven from Mr. Howe's hypothesis. And certainly such an actual influence as Mr. Howe describes, added to the natural faculty, is, if men look near, very distinguishable from mere conservation of that faculty on the one, and predetermination on the other side. For a faculty conserved, as a faculty in *actu primo*, (as men call it,) includes no such hability and present promptitude in itself to action, as Mr. Howe proposes; since then it could never suffer a privation of it but what were irrecoverable. Whereas common experience shows faculties may be sometimes unapt for action, and may be supposed always so, if every moment when they act they be not rendered apt by a superadded influence, which may habilitate them for action without determining them to this or that. So that all

the confusion herein objected to Mr. Howe, is to be referred to that head upon which I have charged it; and the great *jump* is no more than what brain-sick passengers, being carried alongst by the wind and sea, in the heaving of their vessel imagine of the trees and steeples. For he is still in the same place, but no man knows whither away The Discourse may be driven, or what port *it* is bound to, and whether *it* do not sail without steerage, compass, or anchor.

A fourth instance of *its* ignorance and confusion about the matter in controversy, is *its* varying, and that so often and so materially, the terms of the question. First of all *it* told us that *it* asserted the contradictory of Mr. Howe's proposition; which must be therefore by undertaking to prove (as was said formerly) "That God doth by efficacious influence universally move and determine men to all their actions, even those actions that are most wicked," T. D. p. 3. Yet immediately after having joined issue upon this, *it* hath a second device, p. 4, and "better likes Strangius his state of the question, viz. whether God does determine or predetermine all creatures to all and each of their actions." And then, thirdly, p. 5, *it* tells us more fully what the question is, and how *its* predetermination is to be understood, explaining it thus (though not fully enough), viz., "an act of God's by which he limits the creature to this action rather than to that." Such an act The Discourse hath granted at last, and it were to be reasonably expected, that, after having transformed the question thus oft to *its* own understanding and convenience, this contradictory at least to Mr. Howe's proposal should be adhered to as far as it goes, and maintained: for otherwise what occasion was there, or what employment is there left for this spirit of contradiction? unless to rattle through the air, make vain apparitions, or in a calm day on a sudden to stir up a tempest. But if this be The Discourse's anti-proposition, I that intermeddle not as an opinionist either way, but endeavour only to comprehend as far as I can *its* meaning, shall for that purpose put a case in *its* own terms.

Suppose a man to meet with some afflicting calamity which tends to provoke, among other his passions, that of aversion or hatred. He considers this or that man may have contri-

buted to his calamity : he considers also that God may have had a hand in bringing it upon him : he considers, perhaps, (and is yet undetermined, till God at least determine him,) whether to put forth one act of hatred toward this man or another, toward that man or another, toward God, or whether only to hate the evil itself that afflicts him. (For it cannot be that he should hate this man with the same act of hatred with which he hates another man, nor can he hate God by the same act whereby he hates either of them, or the afflicting evil that hath befallen him.) At last he is limited to this rather than another action, and apprehending with that profane person, 2 Kings vi. 33, "Behold this evil is from the Lord, what shall I wait for the Lord any longer?" he pours out his hatred against God himself. The question now is, who limits him to this action rather than to another? Shall we say it is God? The Discourse, holding the affirmative, must say it is God. This is indeed a dreadful representation of the case, but a true one.

Nor is it therefore to be wondered, the question being so frightful, that The Discourse starts and runs away from it so often; and after all this, p. 9. would forget that "predetermination is an act by which God limits the creature to this action rather than that," and undertakes to define it, exclusively to those words, (for the definition includes the whole nature of the thing defined) no more but "a transient action of God which excites every creature to act." And yet, fourthly, considering that the cause required no less; after taking breath, and comforting *its* spirits, The Discourse returns again in part to the question, telling us in the bottom of the same page, 9, "That it is in plain words whether God does move men to all their natural actions, and so to one rather than another." And thus now we have a fourth state of the question, but yet very different from the first; the affirmative of which was undertaken to be defended. In short, the main controversy is about *determining*; but this fourth question does not so much as mention it either in word or in sense. For the *determining* in Mr. Howe's proposition imports and is so expressed, not only a *moving* men, but an *efficacious moving* them. (There are many motions which may be ineffectual.) Nor only a moving them to *this*

action rather than to *that*, but also to do *this wicked* action (for of such is the controversy) *rather* than *forbear it*. What kind of practice is this? It is a worse thing to adulterate truth than money. The terms of the question are the standard. But at this rate no man can know what is *meum* or *tuum*, which is his own hypothesis, and which his adversary's, while what he issued in current sense and weight is returned him clipped or counterfeit. But the observation of this manner of dealing hath put me upon another thought much differing, and which at first perhaps may seem something extravagant.

The camel is a beast admirably shaped for burthen, but so lumpish withal, that nothing can be more inept for feats of activity. Yet men have therefore invented how to make it dance, that, by how much unnatural, the spectacle might appear more absurd and ridiculous. Its keeper leads it upon a pavement so thoroughly warmed, that the creature, not able to escape nor abide it, shifts first one foot, and then another to relieve itself, and would, if possible, tread the air on all four, the ground being too hot for it to stand upon. He in the meantime traverses and trips about it at a cooler distance, striking some volunteer notes on his Egyptian kit, like a French dancing-master. But, knowing that his scholar is both in too much pain, and too dull to learn his measures, he therefore upon frequent observation accords a tune to its figure and footing, which comes to the same account. So that, after daily repeating the lesson in private, they seem both at last to be agreed upon a new Arabic saraband. Having thus far succeeded, he tries next whether what he taught by torture be not confirmed by custom, and if a cool hearth may not have the like effect. The camel no sooner hears his fiddle, but, as if its ears burned with the music, and its memory were in its feet, the animal bestirs forthwith its long legs, and, with many an antic motion, and ill-favoured *coupe*, gratifies the master's patience and expectation. When he finds, upon constant experiment, that it never fails him, he thenceforward makes it public, and, having compounded with the master of the revels, shows it, with great satisfaction to the vulgar, every Bartholomew fair in Grand Cairo. I would not too much vex the similitude, but was run upon

this by a resemblance it hath with some, who, not being framed at all for controversy, and finding the question too hot for them, do, by their flinching and shuffling from it, represent a disputation, till it is grown habitual to them, and they change ground as often, and have the same apprehension of the sound of an argument, as the camel of an instrument.

And yet The Discourse hath a fifth loose foot to clap on at need, as if four had not sufficed to prevaricate with, p. 11. where *it* exercises *its* uncouth nimbleness in syllogizing: but never was anything more ridiculously awkward. Mr. Howe had, Letter, p. 20, mentioned an argument used by those who hold the affirmative of predetermination; "That it necessarily belongs to the original and fountain Being to be the first cause of whatsoever being; and consequently that what there is of positive being in any the most wicked action, must principally owe itself to the determinative productive influence of this first and sovereign cause; otherwise it would seem that there were some being that were neither *primum* nor *a primo*." This was as plainly and as distinctly laid out as possible, but must forsooth be cast into a logical figure, where the officiousness argues the fraud, as of those who make false plate embezzling part of the metal, and yet make the owner pay moreover for the fashion. This is The Discourse's syllogism: "All positive beings are effects of the first cause. All sinful actions" (for, *it* adds, "this is our limitation,") "are positive beings; *ergo*, All sinful actions, as actions, are effects of the first cause." So that here, by a syllogistical legerdemain, that term so essential in their argument, as cited by Mr. Howe, the "determinative productive influence of the first and sovereign cause," is cleanly conveyed away out of sight; the proposition undertaken to be maintained, that "God doth by an efficacious influence universally move and determine men to all their actions, even those actions that are most wicked;" or, as *it* lately varied, "limits men to this action rather than to that," is turned out of doors by its own foster-father, the keeping of it being grown it seems too chargeable; and all now that is inferred is only that "all sinful actions, as actions, are effects of the first cause." And what is that to the purpose? If Mr.

Howe must neither be allowed the use of his own weapons, nor upon the ground which they both were agreed on, it appears that his challenger, notwithstanding all *its* bravades, had no design, or but little disposition to meet him. The whole of this may in a just sense be granted without prejudice to Mr. Howe's cause. For it matters not that they are *effects*, unless it be also said and proved that they are "effects produced by God's determinative influence." Yet how much powder is spent without doing the last execution! First a categorical, then an hypothetical syllogism fired at him, then forces him to distinguish, which is among disputants next to crying quarter, but will not give it him; runs him through with three replies to his distinction, and leaves him dead upon the place. While the proposition is all this while untouched, Mr. Howe is out of gunshot, and his adversary (if one that only skirmishes with himself, deserves to be called so) is afraid to take aim, and starts merely at the report of his own musket. Thus hath The Discourse five several times altered the property of the question; which is my fourth instance of *its* ignorance and confusion about the matter in controversy; unless it ought to be interpreted as an argument rather of a strong brain, after so many times, and suddenly turning round, not to have fallen down senseless.

A fifth instance to the same head, Mr. Howe, Letter, p. 21. had said, "It seems infinitely to detract from the perfection of the ever-blessed God, to affirm that he was not able to make a creature of such a nature, as, being continually sustained by him, and supplied with power every moment suitable to its nature, should be capable of acting, unless what he thus enables he *determine* (that is, for it can mean no less thing, *impel*) it to do also." To this The Discourse replies, p. 15. "If we should take liberty of judging things by their appearance at first sight, without giving ourselves the trouble of a strict disquisition" (take whether you will, the liberty or the trouble, only talk not so magisterially) "we might easily be seduced into an imagination that it does no less infinitely detract from the divine perfection to affirm; that God was not able to make a creature of such a nature, as that it might continually *sustain* itself, without a supply of power every moment from God. For that opinion seems

to tie God to a shorter tedder" (how trivial and irreverently spoken!) "than an ingenious artificer who can raise an edifice that shall last many years without any need of his help for reparations." Compare now these two together, and mark what this reasoning of The Discourse amounts to. Mr. Howe conceives (else it were very hard) that a creature may *act*, being enabled by a continual supply of power from God every moment. Therefore quoth *it*, a creature may *be*, without being sustained or supplied from God any moment. But this perhaps was only to show how ingenious *its* first apprehensions, and how candid are *its* first inclinations; and whether *it* were "easily seduced" itself, or had a mind to seduce others, *it* likes this conceit so well that *it* cannot yet let it go, but subjoins immediately; "And this I the rather take notice of, because I find it the sentiment of the most acute Suarez," &c. But, whereas others find their second thoughts to be the more judicious, *its* judging thus at first sight seems more accurate than *its* second *seeming*: They, *ib.* "who deny God's immediate operation in every action of the creature, (which Mr. Howe seems to do in his answer now under discussion) will doubtless be compelled to deny that the creature does depend immediately upon the actual influence of God." So *it* quotes the most acute Suarez, Met. Disp. 20. This is a most exemplary and primitive charity, whereby The Discourse hath sold all its own acuteness to give it to the poor Suarez; so that it hath reduced itself to that desperate and utmost dulness, as herein to say, "They who deny what Mr. Howe *seems* by this answer to do," that is as much as to say, They who suppose with Mr. Howe that a creature may act being enabled by God every moment, without being impelled, (which he above, and always modestly asserts,) will doubtless be "compelled to deny" that the creature depends immediately upon the actual influence of God, which is tantamount in sense, which useth to be the meaning, as to say, it seems to be denied that the creature does depend, because it is affirmed to depend. Ought not bills to be put up for men affected with so peculiar a distemper? I cannot in the whole Common Prayer find any that is proper for this occasion.

Another instance (for they do so multiply on me in read-

ing, that I forget to number them, and yet they are so signal in their kind, that they are not to be omitted) is p. 96. and onwards; the vain attempt to reconcile God's predetermining by efficacious influence to wicked actions with his wisdom and sincerity by the same *mediums* that were used by Mr. Howe to reconcile his prescience of them; yet this is undertaken to be done from p. 96. for several pages forward, and with the same confidence which is always necessary to such as promise impossibilities. But it is in the meantime an high contempt of all other men, and presumption of one's own understanding that can embolden to such an argument. Who is there, unless Adam gave him his name, but sees the difference between having an influence upon men's wicked actions, and having no influence, which prescience, as such, cannot signify him to have that foreknows? But nevertheless Mr. Howe hath expressly enough asserted, and explained the influence God hath on all human actions.

For further instance, see what The Discourse saith, p. 61. and so along, struggling to bring the immediate concurrence, which Mr. Howe speaks of and avows, under the same prejudice with predetermination, which he disclaims and argues against: for all that idle endeavour might have been saved and prevented by a small supplement of understanding or memory. For Mr. Howe always distinguishes (and so might any ordinary capacity for him, should he have trusted either that or men's common ingenuity) between concurring, though never so immediately, by an influence which doth *but enable* to an action, and by that which doth *determine* to it, or *impel*. If any man do but carry this about with him, as Mr. Howe does through his whole troublesome journey, it is a certain remedy against all galling, at least by this argumentation.

One thing I could not but remark here, p. 61. of The Discourse in passing, how jovial *it* is and bucksome, which is just the humour of tyrants, bloodily cruel, and yet at the same time full of dissoluteness and laughter: "I will pause a little, with the reader's leave, and try my skill what answer I can excogitate for Mr. Howe, which will not be a common friend to us both" (pleasant) "as we have been hitherto one to another, and I hope shall remain notwithstanding this

public contest." Dear Damon, doubtless. But I perceive not that Mr. Howe hath yet had any contest with you, nor, if I can persuade him, is he likely to have for the future, but will avoid you for several reasons. Is this your friendship? what then, and how terrible is your malice? The ancient contests of friendship, and which made some pairs so illustrious, were which of them should die for the other, not which should cut the other's throat. The utmost that I have observed upon such public contests, or that I think a man is bound to in Christianity, hath been to pardon such a friend, and bid him do his office. Here is to be seen or played T. D. indeed, or "Amity a la Mode." But go on. "This distinction is an open friend to us, and to which therefore upon all fit occasions we pay our respects." This is pretty, and most softly said, as if it were by the Great Mogul lying upon a silken bed, and leaning upon cushions. And besides, it is a new invention, being the first time this that ever I heard of a man that contracted friendship with a distinction; but most wise men, (and so I think should Mr. Howe,) have been used to distinguish with whom they contract it. To proceed, speaking of determination and concurrence, these are the words: "But that it waits a fitter time to speak out *her* mind, *she* could say that *she* conceives not how *she* can compel the will," &c. (Of this compelling the will, I shall have occasion also to speak out my mind hereafter.) What use was to be made of a *she* in this place, I cannot well imagine. At last The Discourse grows perfectly wanton: "If *immediate concurrence* thinks *herself* disobliged to satisfy an inquisitive curiosity as to the *modus* or manner how *she* joins with the creature in an action to which sin does necessarily adhere," &c. What would a man think of this? A female! An *immediate concurrence*! What sport were here prepared for that which is by our moderns called wit, but is no more than the luxuriant sterility of land, nor broken up or manured! In the meantime, if The Discourse be really at so much ease, as *it* would seem by this way of talking, it is but a security of understanding, like that of conscience wherewith guilty persons confirm and deceive themselves for the present.

I shall now come to the last instance of this article.

Not that I want abundance of more, or might not produce the whole book in evidence, but because it were time that I came to some period: and lest The Discourse should think I avoided *its* main strength, I shall there examine *it* where *it* pretends to no less than demonstration. For never was there thing so dreadfully accoutred and armed *cap-a-pie* in logic, categorical and hypothetical syllogisms, majors, minors, enthymems, antecedents, consequents, distinctions, definitions, and now at last *demonstration*, to pin the basket: terms that good Mr. Howe as a mere novice is presumed to be unacquainted with, and so far from being able to endure the rattling of The Discourse's armour, that as those Roman legions once bragged, even the sweaty smell of *its* armpits would be sufficient to rout him. But some creatures are as safe by their weakness, as others by their strength, from being meddled with by a considerable adversary. I that cannot boast of any extraordinary faculty for disputation, nor yet confess myself void of common understanding, am therefore the most proper perhaps to try the force of this demonstration; and whether The Discourse be not therein as feeble, as it was lately short in definition. *It*, p. 25. quotes Mr. Howe, Postsc. p. 67. that he does "really believe God's *immediate* *concourse* to all *actions* of his creatures both *immediatione virtutis et suppositi*, yet not determinative to wicked actions;" then The Discourse proceeds: "We shall adventure a demonstration that it implies a contradiction for God to make a creature that can act without predetermination, i. e. applying it to action, and to one rather than to another action. And it is this, That such a creature would be but *ens secundarium*, a second being, not *causa secunda*, a second cause, or, (which is all one) God should be but *ens primum*, not *causa prima*, the first being, not the first cause," which *it* proves thus: "1. If God does concur only by *simultaneous*" (an elegant term of The Discourse's own production) "concourse, and not by *predetermination*, or previous motion, then God cannot be the cause of the actions of the creatures, as they proceed from them: but the consequent is absurd, and *it* presumes Mr. Howe will not own it." What Mr. Howe may do, being thus hard put to it, I will not undertake: but surely there was never anything affirmed with less

truth or sense than The Discourse here doth, that "God should be the cause of the actions of the creatures, as those actions proceed from them." One would think the creatures themselves should be the causes of the actions as they "proceed from them;" (for how otherwise are they causes at all of those actions?) and God the cause of those actions as they "proceed from him." Now how they proceed from him, Mr. Howe hath sufficiently shown his own conception of it, viz. "as they are done by a sufficient influence, which God immediately affords to enable the creature to do them, not to determine it thereto." And is not God to be entitled a *causa prima* as well as *ens primum*, in reference to what is done by his influence in the way before expressed? Whereas, if God be the cause of the actions of the creatures, as those actions proceed from *them*, the action must be done by his influence alone, and then he should not be *causa prima*, because then there were no *causa secunda*. But this was only sure The Discourse's demon-, and the next that follows its -stration.

Mr. Howe had, as before cited, Postsc. p. 67. avowed God's immediate concurrence to all actions of his creatures, both *immediatione virtutis et suppositi*. Upon which concession of his *it* argues thus, (with this prelusory vaunt, p. 26. "He is twice killed that is killed with his own weapon," so that no less than sudden death is to be expected in the case,) "If there be an immediate concurrence, then there is a predetermination or putting the creature upon action before it acts: or else the creature is the first mover of itself to action." This is so unimaginably dull an argument, that really it requires a proportionable dulness in the reader, or an extraordinary acuteness to comprehend it, and how it should be deduced from Mr. Howe's concession of immediate concurrence. For the argument so put receives not the least strength, not any, from that concession of Mr. Howe's, but rather from his non-concession, and that he hath not yielded enough, and as much as The Discourse would have him, which pretends that immediate concurrence alone is not sufficient to exclude the creature from being the first mover of its own actions. For, whether immediate concurrence be granted, or not granted, the case is all one as to this argu-

ment while so much is not granted whereby "an account may be given how God and the creature join in one individual action rather than another," as The Discourse would have it, p. 27. if Mr. Howe could have been persuaded to be thus demonstrated out of his reason.

The illustration of *its* "plausible consequence," as it is called, p. 27. may perhaps be noted, and shall hereafter in its due place, but the demonstration carries the bell away, and I must yet follow its tinkling. And thus it goes on, pp. 27, 28. "An account how the particular actions of any rational creature's will come to be determined, upon the exclusion of predetermination, I know none can be given." And how is thus proved? for sure to affirm it is not demonstration. Why thus: "Not by chance:" (unless this saying so be an instance that it may in some cases) nobody dreamed of any such thing; but this was put in, I suppose, only for more harmony, and to run division. A good sleight it is, by proving first a thing which no man denies, to make it more credible that the argument upon the subject in controversy will be as cogent. For the question is upon *its* second member, "Not by the creature's self-determining power," and here The Discourse's main strength comes upon trial. "For that, as such, is indeterminate as to the acts to which we conceive it must be some way or other determined." Admirably good! So it is indeed till the creature, as Mr. Howe conceives, have determined itself; and so it will be too if God be to determine it, indeterminate till he have determined it. But if the creature do determine itself (which if it never do, how does The Discourse call it "a self-determining power?") then I hope *it* is not indeterminate. So that the whole stress of the cause which was to prove that the creature ("so influenced and actuated by God immediately for any congenerous action," as Mr. Howe hath expressed it) cannot determine itself, is left in the lurch, and no demonstration hath been given hitherto, but of that confusion and ignorance with which I have charged The Discourse in this article, about the matter in controversy.

But *it* argues further, pp. 28, 29. and with the same demonstration, from a second concession (it were methinks more ingenuous, to call it a declaration or assertion) of Mr.

Howe's of God's immediate concurrence and predetermination to the production of good actions, and the necessity thereof, pretends to infer the necessity of God's immediate concurrence and predetermination likewise to all (that is, even to the most wicked) actions. But this, beside the ridiculousness, is so odious an undertaking, that any pious man, should he be superior in the contention, would repent of his victory. I shall here waive it; but if The Discourse pride itself herein, I give *it* the joy as *it* deserveth.

This demonstration I had assigned as the last instance of this head; but I think I may be dispensed with to add another, it being an act of charity. For there are yet behind six articles more, some of them of a more criminal and heinous nature than those two that hitherto I have insisted upon.

1. *Its* falsifications and fictions of what Mr. Howe hath not said.

2. *Its* injurious perverting of what he hath said.

3. *Its* odious insinuations concerning what there is no colour to object against.

4. *Its* insolent boasting and self-applause upon no occasion.

5. *Its* gross absurdities, inconsistencies, self-contradictions, and unsafe expressions.

6. The wrath and virulence of *its* spirit.—And oftentimes it chanceth that one and the same instance is applicable, and may be reduced to several of these heads. But therefore, as oft as I can impute any thing which might receive an higher accusation to *its* ignorance, confusion or dulness (which it is left in any man's self-determining power to remedy) I rather choose to state it upon this more innocent account. And that hath been the cause which hath swelled this head beyond equality: my intention being to be briefer on those that follow. I say therefore, that it is out of charity that I here attribute *its* indifference between the *modus* of God's pre-science, and God's supposed predetermination to wicked actions to *its* stupidity rather than any other article, or make a new one for it on purpose. The thing is thus.

Mr. Howe (Letter, pp. 24, 25.) had, taking notice of an argument which some use from God's pre-science for his predetermination, said, among other things, very piously, "This supposed indetermination of the human will, in re-

ference especially to wicked actions, is far from being culpable of inferring that God cannot therefore foreknow them," &c. And after, upon consideration what others had endeavoured towards explaining or perplexing this matter, modestly adds, "For my own part, I can more easily be satisfied to be ignorant of the *modus* or *medium* of his knowledge, while I am sure of the thing, &c. It cannot therefore be so affrightful a thing to suppose God's foreknowledge of the most contingent future actions, well to consist with our ignorance how he foreknows them, as that we should think it necessary to overturn and mingle heaven and earth rather than admit it." But The Discourse, pp. 32, 33. signifies, and then by quoting some of these words would confirm it, that we need not be more solicitous, and are no more concerned to satisfy ourselves of the *modus* of predetermination to sinful actions, so as to separate them from the sinfulness of them, (for to hold the conclusion is with *it* demonstration,) than about the *modus* of God's prescience of them. Which must argue (whatever else) a palpable shortness of discourse to think there is no odds betwixt a thing so plainly revealed in the word of God as his prescience is, and so agreeable to all rational apprehension, and a notion so altogether unrevealed as this universal predetermination yet appears, and so contrary, if not to the whole scope and design of divine revelation, yet to all common understanding and genuine sense of right reason. But whensoever there shall be so clear proof made that there is such a thing as The Discourse's predetermination, as may soon be brought of prescience, when it shall be as duly stated among the divine attributes, then, and not till then, ought men to practise the same devout resignation of their reasoning about it, as Mr. Howe hath laudably done in that of prescience: but in the meantime it may be handled not as *causa Dei*, but *causa hominis*, it is lawful to plead against it, and not to pay men's belief, but to afford their charity to its abettors.

There was one called Antipheron, whose name therefore seems rather to have been given him by the people from a natural defect they observed in him than by his godfathers: he had a peculiar shortness of sight, but which turned him to account, and saved him the expense of sending to Mala-

moceo or Lambeth to the glasshouse. He needed not so much as contemplate himself in Polyphemus' mirror, the water. He carried his looking-glass always with him; the next air supplied all, and served him not only to breathe, but to see his face in, without any danger of staining or breaking it. A great convenience thus to be able every minute to blow himself a new looking-glass. But how happy were it, if, what the shortness of his sight, the dulness of men's minds could have the same effect, to object to them continually their own image, and make it unnecessary for others to represent them. Then might *The Discourse* also have excused me from this labour, and upon reflexion with itself, have discerned its own unfitness and ignorance to manage this or any other controversy.

For want of such an immediate inspection on *its* own defects, *its* natural undistinctness seems to perceive faults in others, and, to find a mote in their eye, neglects the beam in *its* own. *It* overlooks so gross a practice as in its p. 47. to translate out of Strangius into English Doctor Twisse's argumentation about the same prescience of God of future contingencies, undertaking still to demonstrate, p. 46. (that is the word) that this foreknowledge depends upon the divine decree, while in the meantime *it* never gives us, though the book was in *its* hand, Strangius his full and articulate answer to it in the same place, lest any man should know of it; but, to conceal its own disability for any reply to it, challenges Mr. Howe to answer Dr. Twisse's irrefragable argument over again. But, p. 16., in Mr. Howe it can find two "unpardonable faults in a man of learning and ingenuity."

First, anticipation; for, he having, Letter, p. 21. said, "unless he determine (that is to say, for it can mean no less thing *impel*,") that is the word accused, "the creature to do it:" this is made so heinous, that I thought at first it had been the anticipation of the revenue, but, when all comes to all, I see it is nothing but the explaining a word of less obvious import by another more obvious: and nothing is more usual in *The Discourse* itself, and among men of learning. And *The Discourse* itself adds here in the same minute "impelling, i. e. compelling (for that is Mr. Howe's sense of the term, as will appear ere long,)" which is methinks as early,

and a more perverse anticipation than Mr. Howe is unpardonable for, by how much *it* does by these last words own that impel, unless it signify compel, is allowable, but affirms that in Mr. Howe's sense it is compel, as will appear ere long, which is moreover false, and therefore I will be so subtle as to take out my pardon in time for calling this anticipation; for indeed that which neither is, nor ever can appear, ere long or short (as for Mr. Howe to mean compel) cannot be anticipated.

But the second unpardonable fault of Mr. Howe's is his "immodest begging the question:" and wherein? "I may well call it so," (quoth The Discourse,) "because he knows we neither can nor will grant his argument without ruining our hypothesis." This is all the proof assigned of his begging the question. I do indeed confess that Mr. Howe was much to blame in urging an argument to the ruin of their precious hypothesis; but I think it falls not under that predicament of begging, though this does of robbing the question: and however his crime is more excusable, because, in common probability, Mr. Howe, having wrote his Letter and Postscript before The Discourse replied to him, might be ignorant that it was *its* dear hypothesis. For my part I take the very first title of the book, "*De Causa Dei*," to be more notoriously guilty both of anticipation and begging the question, than that Mr. Howe could have anything upon either account herein justly imputed or objected to him.

The third article, of which I shall catalogue some, it being endless to enumerate all the instances.

Its many strange falsifications and fictions of what Mr. Howe hath not said, and then discoursing of them as if they were said.

As for a first instance. In *its* Epistle, p. 10. Mr. Howe is accused of having "denied God's immediate concurrence to all actions," because, Letter, p. 21. he says, (not as The Discourse cites it, "it sufficiently salves," but) "it may well be thought sufficiently to salve the rights (and privileges, *omitted*) of the first cause, that no action can be done but by a power derived from it, which, in reference to forbidden actions, intelligent creatures may use or not use as they please." Is

anything said here that implies any denial of immediate concurrence? Why may not that power derived be immediate to the action? Is anything said to the contrary, or which accords not well with what is pretended to be said *ex opposito*? But to make this accusation good *it* conceals another passage in the very same paragraph: "Besides that it seems infinitely to detract from the perfection of the ever blessed God, to affirm he was not able to make a creature of such a nature, as, being continually sustained by him, and supplied with power every moment suitable to its nature, should be incapable of acting, unless whatsoever he thus enables he determine it to do also." So that the charge is founded merely on Mr. Howe's not having used the express word immediate concurrence in that sentence, and in concealing disingenuously what he had expressed, and what fully includes immediate concurrence in the sense that he afterwards asserts and explains it, Postser. p. 67. to be both *immediatione virtutis*, and *suppositi* to "all actions, though not determinative to wicked actions." Although it would be something ridiculous to say, that The Discourse read one part of this with *its* eyes shut, and the other part with *its* eyes open; yet it is more false that Mr. Howe did there, or anywhere else, deny God's immediate concurrence; and it is the best excuse of which this (otherwise forgery) is capable.

Second instance. It feigns in the same p. 10. that Mr. Howe hath, Postser. p. 71. "affirmed predetermination to all actions." It were strange if he should, but it is pretended to be proved by these his words: "The active providence of God about all the actions of men, consists not merely in giving them the natural powers whereby they can work of themselves, but in a real influence upon those powers." This is (to speak the most softly, and indeed more softly than the thing will admit) an unkind interpretation, after what Mr. Howe hath been quoted to say in my former instance: but especially, if The Discourse can or would be pleased to consider (after *its* invidious and deceitful generality in citing Letter, from p. 21 et seq. and the Postscript, without assigning one word) that Mr. Howe's asserting here of God's real influence upon men's natural powers does not at all imply that predetermination, which he there all along opposes.

For can there be no influence but such as is determining? He hath shown there both may be and is. How often is there such influence by the operation of common grace as doth not determine?

Third instance. In the same p. 10. because Mr. Howe hath, Letter, p. 20. said, "Some actions of the creatures are in themselves most malignantly wicked," and Letter, p. 24. "intrinsically evil:" therefore *it*, falsely enough, reproaches him to have by these words "denied that all actions have in them a natural goodness." Whereas Mr. Howe here speaks of actions as they are morally evil or wicked, that is, as specified by direction to an undue object. Is not such a specifying direction *intrinsical*? Is not the specification of everything intrinsical to it? And so are not such actions truly said to be evil in themselves which so specified can by no circumstances be made good? But Postser. p. 69 (which is produced to argue him of inconsistency) he owns that "there is not any action so sinful, but hath some natural good as the substrate matter thereof," abstractly and physically considered, and yet so they can never be produced by God nor man, but conereted with their individuating circumstances; nor doth the affirming the one infer the denial of the other. If it did, The Discourse itself hath done the same thing, p. 72. "Thus some actions are said to be in themselves evil, when they are evil in regard of their object, &c. Thus the hatred of God and adultery are in themselves evil," &c. But I suppose it would judge it hard dealing to say that *it* denies (though it be an hard saying to affirm) that natural good which is the substrate matter thereof, and which always at a dead lift *it* hath recourse to.

Fourth instance. From Mr. Howe's having, Letter, p. 20. said, "Nothing is more apparently a simple and most strictly natural impossibility, than not to do an action whereto the agent is determined by an infinite power;" *it*, Epist. p. 11, hath the ridiculous grossness to charge Mr. Howe with there affirming that predetermination forces the will; as if nothing could make a thing naturally impossible to a man but force. He cannot make a new sun; but what force hinders him? This is indeed force, or rather fraud; for otherwise it is impossible to deduce it. But whether of them be used against

a chosen adversary, makes it seems no scruple in a conscience diverted with disputation.

Another instance. *It* calumniates Mr. Howe, p. 87. to have "asserted the positivity of sin," and there calls it, "the foundation of his hypothesis," proceeding with great pains to disprove it, "borrows one argument," to load him with, "from the most learned Dr. Barlow, the now renowned bishop of Lincoln," urges the minor, then the major, and draws up a whole process, as if it were in the spiritual court, against him, and T. D. were become his chancellor. There is none in England, nor especially Mr. Howe, as I imagine, but would reverence the authority of that excellent person in all points of learning or controversy. But *The Discourse* is too bold to make use of his power without his commission, in a case where Mr. Howe hath not said one word to affirm such positivity.

A further instance. With the same truth, that is, falsehood, *it* feigns, and that often, that Mr. Howe, by God's having irresistible influence upon the will, means "God's forcing of the will unto the most wicked actions." As for example, p. 39. from Mr. Howe's, p. 24. "Irresistibly, that is in his sense forcibly." Whereas Mr. Howe there objects to his adversaries, their holding such an irresistible determination of the will, but forcing of it nowhere. Yet at what expense of learning, and with how much loss of ink and ingenuity does *The Discourse* argue that the will cannot be forced! which Mr. Howe, having denied that irresistible influence, must of necessity disown for its further absurdity, had he thought his adversaries guilty of it. But he appears to have been far from imagining it of them, nor could any but *The Discourse* have imputed it to him as his sense, that God does by force whatsoever he does irresistibly. What law of reason is there, or how can *The Discourse* justify such a falsification but by custom?

If that shall be a sufficient plea, *it* will never want instances further to warrant the practice. As in this following (forgery I may not call it, having to do with such exactness, but) rasure. Mr. Howe, having been upon the argument of the will of God concerning those that perish, had, Letter, p. 45. said, "The resolve of the divine will in this matter, was

not concerning the event," what he shall do, (i. e. abstractly and singly, as these next following words show) "but concerning his duty what he should, and concerning the connexion between his duty and his happiness." Hereupon what does mean *The Discourse*? p. 116. It refers to those words of his, p. 45. and recites a further passage of his Letter, to argue them of repugnancy these to the former, but to that purpose conceals Mr. Howe's last clause, "but concerning his *duty* what he should, and concerning the *connexion* between his duty and his happiness," which being taken in, as it ought, there could have been no pretence of inconsistency. And it adds, that Mr. Howe's answer, Letter, p. 46. "that 'imperfection is no way imputable to the divine will merely for not effecting everything whereto it may have a real propension,' is no answer to the objection:" upon this strange pretence, that "a real propension of will is no will," as if it were a thing impossible that propension should be either habitual or actual.

So also for continual instance. *The Discourse*, pp. 118. 119, feigns a question to have been proposed by Mr. Howe, "Whether it be fitting for God efficaciously to overpower all men into a compliancy with the overtures he makes to them in common:" and then *it* creates also an answer for him: "It is not fit for God to overpower men without making any overtures to them at all;" and, to make a song of three parts, judiciously decides: "the answer is not fitted to the question." I must confess that upon some former experiments I doubted of the rectitude of *its* judgment, but I was not wary enough to suspect a falsehood, which must be so notorious, as that there should be no such question or answer. But in good truth none there is that I can find of Mr. Howe's mark: the question nowhere in terms, but the answer neither in terms nor sense, nor anything like it. So that *The Discourse* is not to be allowed in any court either as a competent judge or a legal witness, but may deserve to be tried for this as a criminal before any logic-tribunal. Nor needs there any other evidence against it for conviction, than those very words of Mr. Howe, that *it* there hath cited: "Grace sometimes shows itself in preventing exertions, and in working so heroically as none have beforehand [in the neglect of

its ordinary method] any reason to expect," Letter, p. 53. Now look back upon the supposititious answer, "to whom God makes no overtures at all:" then compare Mr. Howe's words, "in the neglect of its ordinary methods;" and now let any man judge of the honesty of such an adversary. For how can they be said to neglect God's ordinary methods to whom he makes no overtures at all? Nor is the second scheme of *its* question and answer which immediately follows any whit better, but guilty of as perfect forgery as the first, and so ill contrived, that it neither agrees with the former, nor with the book, though pretending to be a true copy.

And an instance it is of the same fraud to feign, pp. 119, 120. that Mr. Howe in his Letter hath, abstractly from the more fit course that God hath taken, "determined the unfitness of God's giving grace and salvation to all men."

All that Mr. Howe hath said therein amounts only to assert the course which is not taken to be less fit, and that God doth, from the perfect rectitude of his own nature, take that course which was to be taken most wisely, and do that which was most congruous and fit to be done, Letter, p. 56. What can better become us than to judge so of the ways that God hath pitched upon, and wherein we have God's own choice to precede and be a guide to our judgment?

I shall conclude this article with *its* quotation, p. 44. out of Dr. Manton's Comment on James i. 13. p. 101. as if that learned divine had affirmed the disputed predetermination by those words. "Many who grant prescience, deny preordination," (viz. quoth The Discourse, the decree whereof predetermination is the execution, so I understand him,) "lest they should make God the author of sin;" and *it* forsooth understands him so, but I hope without any obligation to better and sincerer judgments. For what one word is there here that can imply that preordination to be executed by the way of predetermination? It is no wonder if Mr. Howe be not secure while yet living, when those that are at rest cannot escape so notorious a practice. This is the same as to cut off a dead man's hand to subscribe with it to a forgery. There needed no less, it seems, than Dr. Manton's good name, which is like a precious ointment, to give a better odour to those putrid suggestions and expressions of "Pro-

testantism grown of late weary of itself," &c., bestowed on Mr. Howe on this occasion. And yet (for it made me curious) there are witnesses above exception that also Dr. Manton consented with Mr. Howe in this point, and expressed a great sense of the danger of the contrary opinion. And whensoever The Discourse signifies its doubt of it, I will undertake to make out their evidence.

The fourth article that naturally succeeds the former falsifications.

Its vain but most injurious attempts to pervert what Mr. Howe hath said.

As for a first instance, where, p. 45. it represents Mr. Howe's words, Letter. p. 19. to imply "an affirmation of a foreknowledge of Christ's death antecedent to God's decree concerning it." The words are these, which *it* ushers in with ("Let us hear, if our patience can bear this exercise, whether Mr. Howe's gloss upon Acts iv. 28. doth not corrupt the text: 'If they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.'") That is, "God foreseeing wicked hands would be prompt and ready for this tragic enterprize, his sovereign power, and wise counsel concurred with his foreknowledge, so only and not with less latitude, to define or determine the bounds and limits of that malignity than to let it proceed unto this execution." What common sense or ordinary ingenuity could have found less in these words than that Mr. Howe doth therein at least profess the foreknowledge and the decree to have been *simul et semel*, which is far from affirming the foreknowledge to be antecedent? But Mr. Howe had, moreover, immediately before these words cited, said, "It was a thing which God's hand and counsel had determined *before* to be done." But this The Discourse conceals, lest *itself* should be detected of such a wilful perversion, and the better to make Dr. Twisse's censure (which otherwise had been nothing to the business) take place upon Mr. Howe, p. 46. "Those Jesuitical dictates of the foreseen determination of the human will before God's decree, are not the dictates of divines disputing but dreaming." There was not any colour in Mr. Howe's words for

any such imputation; though I doubt not that Mr. Howe believes God's decree in this case to be but suitable to that agency which he everywhere supposes him to have in things of that nature.

A second instance of the same dealing is upon Mr. Howe's assertion, Postscript, p. 67. of God's immediate concurrence to all actions of his creatures. For, p. 55. thence *it* pretends that it follows, and that Mr. Howe implies that "God affords men a leading concurrence to actions downright evil." And yet Mr. Howe had but (Postsc. p. 67) explained and limited that concession, saying, "The concurrence or influence, which I deny not to be immediate to any actions, I only deny to be determinative as to those which are wicked." Agreeably to what he saith also, Postsc. p. 72. But that limitation The Discourse takes not any notice of, pretending not to understand a difference between inducing men to actions which God will reward, and to those for which he will ruin them. And upon this presumption *it* falls into the usual fit of boasting vaingloriously over Mr. Howe. For where perversion may go for ingenuity, insolence may also pass for reason.

I cannot but observe also how in pursuit of this subject, because Mr. Howe, Postsc. p. 70. cited Luke vi. 9. with Hosea xiii. 9. to show the difference, and how much more agreeable it was to the nature of God to induce men by determinative influence to imperfectly good actions which yet lead to salvation and blessedness, than to such as are downright evil, and tend to their ruin; *it* hereupon, p. 58. frames a chain of syllogistical argumentations, all of *its* own devising, which yet *it* hath the face to father upon Mr. Howe. I call it the rather a *chain*, because I remember to have read of one who had so singular a faculty of linking one lie artificially upon another, that they called him at Rome by a new nickname *Catena*: and the dexterity of The Discourse, in almost as sinister a quality, might pretend to the same denomination. The Samoides wear guts about their necks, but swallow them at last down their throats; the same natural links serving them first for ornament, and then for nutriment: and were The Discourse obliged to eat *its* own words, and feed upon its own chain of syllogisms, it were a diet, though

slender and unclean, yet fit enough for a barbarian. There is nothing can be more savage and inhuman, than to personate Mr. Howe here arguing, "If it be unlawful for man to destroy life, then it is unlawful to God." And then, as if it were a formed dispute, and wherein Mr. Howe maintained the affirmative, *it* denies the antecedent, the consequent, and the connexion of *its* own (not, as is pretended, Mr. Howe's) enthymeme, and laboriously proceeds to disprove the whole argument through the several members. Let but any man have recourse to that place of the Postsc. p. 70, and consider whether there be any colour thence to suppose that Mr. Howe intended there, or gave any occasion for such arguing; and whether all the blasphemies or heresies that ever were invented, might not be imputed to him with as much reason. I find myself so concerned hereat (not in behalf of Mr. Howe, but of all common morality among mankind) that I think fit to repress myself, and rather leave the crime to any reader's, or to The Discourse's own censure; for, notwithstanding this and all *its* other errors, I conceive *it* yet to have some intervals both of understanding and conscience.

But a most indecent thing it was for *it* to trifle in a matter so serious, and it had been far more becoming to have given a clear account of *its* own belief in this point, than to have forged arguments for others, create shadows for *itself* to sport with, and to act in one personage the cause, the judge, the witness, the plaintiff, and the defendant. After all those to and fro, up and downs of so many tedious pages that *it* obliges us to, if we will go along with it through this particular, might I not in recompense crave leave to be solemnly and soberly answered upon two or three questions arising upon this debate for my own better information? First, whether *it* do not conscientiously believe that God doth punish men for doing actions which in such and such circumstances he hath forbidden them to do? Next, whether it be not manifest that according to *its* opinion God must determine men to those actions in those circumstances, that is in the same circumstances wherein they are done? And lastly, whether that determining influence can be withstood? If *it* once affirm all these, as I see no tolerable evasion endeavoured but that *it* holds them all *pro confesso*, how can *it*

with all *its* logic and metaphysics extricate *itself* from maintaining that absurdity that God ruins men for what he hath induced them to, that is not simply to destroy life (as *it* vainly strives to shift off the business), but to destroy it upon such terms? And then how frivolous will all those answers, p. 55. and so forward appear to Mr. Howe's argument mentioned on a former occasion, Posts. p. 69. "We ourselves can in a remoter kind concur to the actions of others: yet it doth not follow that because we may afford our leading concurrence to actions imperfectly good, that therefore we may afford them to those that are downright evil; because to prayer, therefore to cursing and swearing, and then ruin men for the actions we have induced them to: you will say, God may rather, but sure he can much less do so than you." Now The Discourse calls this (and would blame it upon that account, as comparing God and the creature) Mr. Howe's argument *a pari*; but it is, methinks, *a fortiori*, and therefore more reverent. If a well-natured man would not do so, it is much more disagreeable to God's nature.

In all these things Mr. Howe (and it is that makes me like him the better) declares his own sense plainly, however, while the other never speaks out, unless to give ill words, and seems to search not for the truth, but merely for contention.

The last evidence of this article shall be where *it*, p. 111. takes occasion to say, Mr. Howe, p. 43. "professes his dislike of the common distinction of *voluntas beneplaciti et signi*, in this present case" [viz. to explain how God wills the salvation of all, and yet only of some] "under which such as coined, and those that have much used it, have only rather (I doubt not) concealed a good meaning, than expressed an ill one." Thus far it quotes Mr. Howe, but there stops and saith, "the rest is not worth the trouble of transcribing;" but I therefore suspect the more that it is worth it, and out of some cunning fetch omitted, and shall the rather take that trouble upon me. "It seems, I confess, by its more obvious aspect, too much to countenance that ignominious slander, which profane and atheistical dispositions would fasten upon God and the course of his procedure toward

men, &c., as though he only intended to seem willing of what he really was not; that there was an appearance to which nothing did *subesse*. And then why is the latter called *voluntas*, unless the meaning be, he did only will the sign, which is false and impious," &c. But upon the former quotation out of Mr. Howe, wherein he only excepts against the distinction "in the present case," and signifies that a good meaning was intended by it; The Discourse, p. 116. represents him as meaning the same thing with Dr. Twisse, (who also notes the impropriety of the latter member *voluntas signi*, as improperly called a will, and only signifying man's duty,) and "blaming himself yet in blaming him:" when Mr. Howe had in plain words approved the meaning of the distinction. The gentlest imagination a man can frame to himself hereof, is that *its* own brain was perverted before Mr. Howe's intention.

The fifth article is:

Its odious insinuations concerning what it hath no colour to object or except against.

Of this I shall give three instances in one paragraph. T. D., pp. 103, 104, where *it* pretends first to be "at a strange loss for an antecedent to a relative in Mr. Howe's Letter, p. 31, 'Neither yet was it necessary that effectual care should be taken *they* should actually reach all, and be applied to every individual person.'" The loss is indeed a strange one, and I condole it. For *it* hath herein suffered great damage of eyesight, understanding, memory, and ingenuity, very sensible disasters, and with great difficulty to be repaired. Mr. Howe's immediate words in the foregoing period were, "that the divine edicts should be of an universal tenor as they are, the matter of them being of universal concernment, and equally suitable to the common case of all men." Now add to these words as it follows in that place, "neither yet was it necessary they should actually reach all," and then say whether any man else would not have seen that the *they* here was relative to the divine edicts: beside that the whole tract of the foregoing argument leads and refers continually to

them. But then, when after a long loss *it* hath, casting about even to Postsc. pp. 70 and 71, “out of love to Mr. Howe’s person and the truth,” hit it at last to be the divine edicts “of which possibly Mr. Howe meant it,” yet then *it* suggests from those words of his “neither yet was it necessary,” (that is, to the purpose Mr. Howe was speaking of, the vindicating of God’s wisdom and sincerity, as any sober reader will easily see) as if they were thought not at all necessary. If this be candour, what is blackness? It is as much as to say, that, unless it be necessary for the vindication of God’s wisdom and sincerity to provide that every man should have a Bible and read it, it is no way necessary for man’s salvation.

The second instance in the same paragraph is to quote Mr. Howe’s Letter, p. 31, “And thus how easily, and even *naturally*, (by messengers running from nation to nation, some to communicate, others to inquire after the tidings of the gospel,) would the gospel soon have spread itself through the world;” and hereupon to suggest as if Mr. Howe thought “the seeds of the gospel were in men by nature.” Unless understanding and wilful ignorance be the same thing, no man could have avoided the sense of the word *naturally* here, to be, easily, and of course. But if that term had been intended in the strict sense (though the mollifying of it by that particle, *even*, shows it was not), how could the inquiry after a thing new, and said to be of common concernment, but be natural, although the thing itself were not?

And the third is: whereas Mr. Howe had, Letter, pp. 33, 34, enumerated many instances of God’s clemency and bounty to men in general, and added that, “they might by these understand God to have favourable propensions towards them; and that though they have offended him, he is not their implacable enemy, and might by his goodness be led to repentance,” that hereupon The Discourse, p. 104, having nothing to allege against any particular of what is there said, brings in Mr. John Goodwin to have writ somewhat of the like import in his “Pagan’s Debt and Dowry,” and the like quotations of it afterwards from Mr. Hoard, which is all for spite, but nothing to the purpose. Could *it* have laid down an antithesis to anything that Mr. Howe had said, it is probable *it* would have gone that way to work, and not have

used this pagan invention of baiting Mr. Howe in the skins of others; or daubing him over with pitch to serve for torch-light, and put out the light of the gospel. But it is more probable *it* would have proceeded both ways; for *its* zeal for the truth seems not greater than *its* animosity against Mr. Howe, whencesoever it arises. But *it* durst not adventure to say that Mr. Howe hath made Mr. John Goodwin's ill use of this notion. Had there been any such thing, The Discourse seems not in humour to have passed it over, and that calamitous figure of *meliora spero*, hoping the best of him, but suggesting the worst, would have been changed to a plain accusation. If *it* would have dealt fairly, here was the proper place to have spoken out, and have told us distinctly *its* own opinion in so weighty a matter. Does it know what God (though most unobliged) might do to furnish such with what might be sufficient, if they seriously desired such merey at his hands? Will *it* think *itself* bound to tear Rom. ii. 4. out of *its* Bible, because John Goodwin hath cited it? Or, will *it* adventure to be the heathens' compurgator at the day of judgment, that they have no more considered the tendency of the divine goodness?

These indeed would have been worthy achievements, and proper to one of so great enterprize; but to throw upon Mr. Howe an undeserved obloquy of other men's names in this manner, how base a thing was it? considering besides how *its* own name (though hitherto studiously concealed) might, in the vicissitude of human affairs, serve men hereafter for a more infamous quotation.

I shall add no more than p. 108, *its* citing Mr. Howe's Letter, p. 37, 38, "That which God's declarations do amount to is, &c., that, if they which finally perish, neglect to attend to those external discoveries of the word, &c., they are not to expect he should overpower them by a strong hand, and save them against the continual disinclination of their own wills;" upon which *it* saith, "I am not able to make sense of the last words, for I understand not what overcoming by a strong hand (in a sinner's case) God can make use of that leaves the will under disinclination to salvation." What reason or occasion do Mr. Howe's words give for making this puzzle? Could *it* not understand that some men are so

unreasonable as to expect salvation, while yet at the same time they are disaffected to the means of it? And that some, because they dislike the ordinary means, please themselves with a hope that God will at last cast use some extraordinary, to overcome that disaffection?

The sixth article.

Its most unseemly and insolent boastings and self-applauses upon no occasion.

Yet therefore the more frequent, as his “killing Mr. Howe with his own weapon,” p. 26, in *its* argument about Mr. Howe’s two concessions, the vanity whereof as to the first I have before noted: and now as to what *it* brags of against the second as a “triumphant evidence,” I shall no less show *its* impertinency. The argument is *its* own, p. 30, “If it be the indetermination of the powers to individual actions that makes an excitation of them, to one rather than to another, necessary.” Stay here: *it* takes this for granted, and as it is in itself destitute of strength, so *it* leaves it very unkindly without any proof or assistance to shift as well as it can. Whereas *it* knows that it is said on the opposite part, “That it is not indetermination merely (which the self-determining power of the will can remove) but aversion to good actions (which gracious habits do lessen, but not remove) that makes God’s holy determining influence necessary.” Now let *it* go on, “and the possibility of action contained in the power that makes the reducing of that possibility to action no less necessary to good actions.” If there be any sense in this, it is very recondite, and would require a spirit that can discover hidden treasure. Can possibility of action make action necessary? It must be as false as it is true, that an argument can be drawn from power to act, affirmatively. Indeed, should *it* have said, where there is only a possibility of action, that possibility must be reduced to action, before there can be any action, it were true, but then it is one of these things that are *nimis vera*, and which it is ridiculous to put into any proposition, much more where it is to no purpose, as here it is manifestly to none:

for we are still left as uncertain, as if no such thing had been said, what it is that must reduce that possibility to action. But that it should be added, "no less necessary to good actions," is beyond the power of witchcraft to understand what *it* should mean here. Doth *it* pretend to be discoursing with any one that thought determination to good actions less necessary? I thought *its* present part was to oppose one that said it was more necessary. And yet this most insignificant scheme of discourse is shut up with a *quod erat demonstrandum*, and with the phantastury of claiming to it evidence equal to what the apostle's words carry, Rom. xi. 36. For it was to those words that Mr. Howe's Letter, p. 29, gave those "lofty epithets" of "triumphant evidence" which The Discourse cavils at, and borrows, with no mind to restore them, to adorn the street pageantry of this pitiful argument.

Another instance may be *its* jovial rant, p. 37. "What is now become of Mr. Howe's thin sophistry, and collusive ambiguity?" &c. It is necessary to read upon this occasion from *its* p. 32. l. 12. at least to p. 37. l. 14. for it is too long to insert here such a parcel of stuff, but there you may have it. *Its* business here is to defend the predeterminers' opinion against the charge of God's necessitating men to sin, and of attempting to alleviate it by God's being above law, but man under it. Let me conjure any reader by the most potent charms of persuasion, by all that is ridiculous in *its* whole book, or in mine, but to peruse at leisure how miserably those points are there along managed. *It* owns at first that it is "an hard province to answer to all the objections," then softens it, as fire mollifies clay, and at last, after having confessed and begged, comes off with that glorious exaltation over Mr. Howe's thin sophistry. It were needless to exemplify all the like passages, where it arrogates commendation to itself beyond what any friend, and vilifies Mr. Howe below what any other enemy, would offer at both equally undeserved.

The seventh article.

Its very gross absurdities, self-contradictions, and inconsistencies, to which may be added diverse unsafe expressions, not a little reflecting on God and religion.

As first, p. 18. *it* discourses concerning the security of good angels by God's determining influence, which no man that I know will quarrel for, and by which I doubt not it supposes their immutability, but, p. 20. speaking of man, *it* saith, that "God made him mutable (and how could he do otherwise, unless he should have made him a God?)" What then? doth it conceive that the good angels are gods? Suchlike was its absurdity, p. 27. of the necessity of predestination, because God's immediate concurrence could not determine Adam's will. Than which, what can be more notorious? the controversy being, whether God doth determine men to wicked actions, but *its* argument to this effect, that, if God do not determine men to such wicked actions by concurrence, he doth it, as elsewhere *it* calls it, by pre-course. Whereas, *it* should have known the thing denied by Mr. Howe to be, that God doth by efficacious influence determine to them at all. And so *its* argumentation there signifies only that if God do not determine to them, he doth determine to them.

A third instance is where, p. 40. Mr. Howe having, Letter, pp. 9, 24. said that the "argument from the pretended impossibility of God's foreknowing sinful actions, if he did not determine the agent to them, will not infer, that if he determine not to them, he cannot foreknow them, but only that we are left ignorant of the way." *It* collects thence, p. 41. (and "thinks Mr. Howe hath much overshot himself") that he universally denies our knowledge of the way how God foretells future contingencies." Whereas Mr. Howe, Letter, p. 20. stated their argument in express words, "that it were otherwise impossible God should foreknow the sinful actions of men," and here, 47. only saith, "the argument infers so much and no more," as to "wicked actions," yet *it* makes this an universal denial as to all actions. Hereby it is easy to judge, which of the two is the better archer, or came nearer the mark; which shot home, and which over.

That for a fourth is what you please to call it, p. 70. but a pretty innocent thing of the like nature. "Irresistible imports," *it* saith, "a relation of the action of the agent to some resistance," which is pleasant, by how much impossible to imagine how that which cannot be resisted imports that which is resisted.

But this, p. 76. is a most refined absurdity, while in the same place *it* taunts Mr. Howe for "gratifying his own unscholastic humour. *Something* is said to be impossible respectively, as if a man will fly *that* he should have wings." But this among duller men hath hitherto been thought an instance of what is quite contrary, to wit, of hypothetical necessity. And if *it* should find *itself* hereafter obliged to fly from its adversary, I suppose that *it* would think a pair of wings to be pertinent and highly convenient, if not necessary.

I have before upon occasion, and in passing, noted how he undertakes to prove that there are no actions of free agents evil in themselves, when nevertheless it had, p. 72. affirmed the hatred of God and adultery to be in themselves evil.

Such is that too elsewhere touched, p. 63. where it cites Mr. Howe, Postsc. p. 69. intimating that some actions are evil *quoad substantiam*, that is, morally evil or wicked; and *it* would have it to be a contradiction to own that any such have natural good in them. How wisely! As if it were not possible for the same action to be morally evil, and naturally good. Or did *it* never hear of the substance of an act in the moral sense? And doth not a forbidden action use to be called evil in the substance of it? When, if the action be not forbidden, but commanded, and only the undue manner or end forbidden, as in *its* own instance of almsgiving for vainglory, it is said to be good, *quoad substantiam*? It is to be wondered that *it* summoned not here its logic to prove that an action hath no substance; but that would have spoiled *its* learned note that follows, where Mr. Howe, Postscript, p. 69. to the question, "Is there any action so sinful, that hath not some natural good as the substrate matter thereof?" answers, "True, and what, shall it therefore be inferred, that God must by a determinative influence produce every such action, whatsoever reason there be

against it? One might better argue thence the necessity of his producing every hour a new world, in which there would be a great deal more of positive entity, and natural goodness." *It* hereupon undertakes, p. 65. to prove that there is "as much entity and natural goodness in a sinful action, as there would be in myriads of worlds, should God create every hour a new world;" and saith, that "to deny this were unworthy a philosopher:" and *its* proof is, "If *substantia non recipit magis et minus*, or if *ens et bonum sit convertibile*, then an action hath as much entity as a world."

But how much doth *it* reflect upon God and that religious sense which we ought to cherish of him, p. 27. when *it* makes God to have determined innocent Adam's will to the choice of eating the fruit that was forbidden him? This seemed so horrid at first, that *itself* startles a little at it, interposing in a parenthesis, "(suppose before the prohibition passed upon it,)" and yet, because *its* cause required no less, and appetite gathers with eating, it takes courage afterward to assert God's predetermination of Adam's will to the act of eating, which was not till after the prohibition: and to "illustrate" (as it pretends) so black a thing, it parallels God's moving him to that act rather than to another, "with a writing-master's directing his scholar's hand." If the cause be not to be defended upon better terms than so, what Christian but would rather wish he had never known writing-master, than to subscribe such an opinion; and that God should make an innocent creature in this manner to do a forbidden act, for which so dreadful a vengeance was to ensue upon him and his posterity?

No less pregnant with impious absurdity is it to assert, pp. 29, 30. the equal necessity of predetermining influence to wicked actions as to good; and that dangerous insinuation, p. 19. that God's promises convey no right to them to whom they are made. For, "it is a ruled case," *it* says, "in the schools, that God cannot properly be said a debtor to his creatures;" and then adds of *its* own, "no, not when he hath passed a promise to them," and pursues this so far as to say, "If he should (to suppose an impossibility)" which, considering what follows, had been therefore better omitted, "break his word, he would be but *mendar, non injustus*,

and puts it too in English, "a liar, not unjust." What dispensation have some men to speak at this rate, or what dangerous points do they run themselves upon, and their readers! I remember there is a picture before that "Ruler of the case" his book with this addition, "*bene scripsisti de me Dive Thoma.*" But let God be true and *just* to his word, and every man (that saith otherwise) a liar.

For the last I shall only transcribe a few lines of *its* idle harangue, p. 35. in which I know not whether the malice against Mr. Howe, or irreverence towards our Saviour do predominate through the whole absurdity. "We might also observe upon his rhetorical amplifications of his argument, that he seems to be no ill-willer to transubstantiation: for if the natural notions of God's goodness should be infinitely dearer to us than our senses, I see not why the notion of God's sincerity that he means as he speaks, should not challenge a share in our endearments, and so why *hoc est corpus meum*, should not assure us that the bread is transubstantiated, though our senses, &c., join in a common testimony against it." Viciously and wantonly said, as if God, where-soever he speaks in a figure, were guilty of insincerity.

The eighth and last article against The Discourse shall be

The virulence of its spirit.

Whereof one instance may suffice, p. 122. where, closing the book, *it* saith, "that Mr. Howe's doctrine opens a wide door for atheism, and reckons him, *by strong implication*, among those who acknowledge God in words, but deny him in deed:" whereas, what is it that Mr. Howe hath denied, but "that God doth determine men by efficacious influence to those very actions which he forbids, and for which he will punish them?"

But I spare my hand, The Discourse all along boiling over, foaming, frothing, and casting forth the like expressions, which I refrain to enumerate, that I may not incur the fate of him that stirs the Indians' poison-pot, who when he falls down dead with the steam and stench, they then throw the doors open, and dip their arrows.

I should now therefore have concluded, were there not something yet in *its* Prefatory Epistle so sordid, that I reserved it for behind, as the most proper place it could be applied to. Nor shall I therein only have marshalled it according to its dignity, but do hope moreover, as the head of the viper is a specific against its venom, so to find out a remedy against the book in the preface; wherein it shows so peculiar a malice and despite to Mr. Howe, and insinuates the same to the reader, as requires a particular preservative. And, had I not already been at the pains of the foregoing remarks, here was, I see, a more compendious occasion, but sufficient to have administered me the same observations. For all the other faults that I have objected against the bulk of *The Discourse* might as easily have been discovered in *its* preface, as a good physiognomist can by the moles in the face assign all those that are upon any other part of the body. But among them all *its* superlative dulness is here especially the more manifest (as usually happens in such cases) by how much *it* endeavours most at acuteness and elegance; so palpable, that even *itself* could not be wholly insensible of it; but pp. 3, 4. feelingly confesses both in Latin and English, that in reading Mr. Howe's Letter and Postscript, "*obstupuit steteruntque comæ;*" and a double "astonishment" under which *it* laboured. This doubtless it was, like the disaffections derived from the head to the nerves, which propagated that horrid stupidity that I have already noted through *its* whole treatise. But that quality is here so exalted, (nature, it seems, having given *it* that torpor for a defence,) that in touching it thus lightly, I perceive a numbness to strike up through my pen into my faculties, and shall therefore point at some particulars, rather than adventure to handle them.

Mr. Howe had in passing, Postscript, p. 65. glanced upon an improper redundance of words used by a former adversary, "The divine independent will of God;" as he might with good reason take notice of it, being as much sense as to have said the human dependent will of man. But hereupon *The Discourse*, p. 9. having for revenge turned over his whole Letter and Postscript to find out the like absurdities, highly gratulates *itself* in three instances, but all of

them curtailed from the coherence to make for the purpose. One, Letter, p. 23. "In which sense how manifest it is that the perfect" (all this omitted) "rectitude of God's own holy gracious nature" ("is an eternal law to him" omitted). The second, Letter, p. 28. "God satisfies himself in himself, and takes highest complacency in the perfect goodness, congruity, and" (all this omitted) "rectitude of his own most holy will and way;" and for these Mr. Howe is arraigned upon a crime, by a Greek word of law called *pleonasm*. The third is "actions malignantly wicked" (which The Discourse saith is the same as "wickedly wicked"), Postscript, pp. 65. and 69. as *it* quotes, but is in Letter, 20; and here, *it* leaves out also the word *most*, which would have spoiled the exception taken against it; for what Mr. Howe there saith is, "even those actions that are in themselves *most* malignantly wicked." Are there not some actions, some men, more malignantly wicked than others? Or will The Discourse apply *its* old end of Latin here—"aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus" to "Paulus," Rom. vii. 13. "sin, exceedingly sinful?" It was time, therefore, in all reason to conclude this exercise with saying, "But these are childish eliminations, unfit to be bandied from hand to hand by sober persons;" owning *itself* at once to have been guilty herein of an intemperate, inept, and unmanly kind of procedure.

Neither can I pass by unregarded that new invention of rearing up pillars to men's infamy; but which have sometimes, and may now also, turned to the disgrace of the architect. *It* cuts out, pp. 10, 11. several lines here and there, out of the whole Letter and Postscript, to post them up in columns, and Mr. Howe upon them as a common notorious self-contradictor; whereas, if any man will take the pains to restore those sentences to their first situation and coherence, (as I have formerly done,) there will not be found the least inconsistency in them. But if this practice be allowable, there is not any chapter in the Bible out of which *it* may not with the same integrity extract either blasphemy or nonsense; though I am far from suspecting The Discourse of such an undertaking. For indeed *it* assigns the true reason, (and fit to be inscribed over the portico,) "*non est ingenii mei hosce nodos dissolvere*," and as faithfully translates it: I

“have not the wit to untie these knots,” which is now the third public confession of *its* stupidity in the Preface. Yet will I not do *it* the affront to ascribe it either to *its* modesty, ingenuity, or self-conviction; for *it* intended them doubtless all to the contrary. Only the same dulness, that first occasioned *its* errors and mistakes, did likewise lead *it* to these ominous expressions, and like those that discern not the back from the edge, to wound *itself* in cutting at the adversary.

Its dulness, therefore, or as it is expressed, p. 8. “the consciousness of *its* own disabilities,” being so oft attested under *its* own hand, and to which, if necessary, *it* might have another thousand witnesses, I shall not further pall my reader on this subject, but return rather from this digression to my first design of obviating that in the Preface, which hath all the marks upon it of malice, except the wit wherewith that vice is more usually accompanied. Of that the very title is an argument. “De Causa Dei, or a Vindication of the Common Doctrine of Protestant Divines concerning Predetermination, &c., from the Invidious Consequences with which it is burthened by Mr. John Howe, in a late Letter and Postscript of God’s Prescience. By T. D.” Who would have thought that T. D. should have become the defender of the faith, or that the cause of God were so forlorn, as to be reduced to the necessity of such a champion. It seems much rather to be the fallacy of “*non causa pro causa*,” and usurped only the better to prepossess against Mr. Howe such readers as would be amused by the frontispiece. The cause of God! Turn, I beseech you, *its* whole book over, and show me anything of that *decorum* with which that should have been managed. What is there to be found of that gravity, humility, meekness, piety or charity requisite to so glorious a pretence? (graces wherewith God usually assists those that undertake his quarrel, and with which Mr. Howe on all occasions appears to be abundantly supplied). But a perpetual eructation there is of human passions, a vain ostentation of mistaken learning, and a causeless picking of controversy.

To that title, under which Mr. Howe is so injuriously proscribed, succeeds forsooth an Epistle Dedicatory, “To the Reverend Mr. John Howe, Author of the late Letter and

Postscript of God's Prescience." An additional civility and compellation invented by The Discourse only for greater mockery. And a many fine words *it* bestows upon him at first, to miscall him presently with the more emphasis, praises the author, and then the book; but no otherwise than, as a person to be degraded is brought forth in public attired in all his formalities, to be stripped of them again with further ignominy.

Nay, even Mr. Boyle himself cannot wholly escape *its* commendation; which I do not object as if anything could be well said of him that is not due to his merit. But there are a kind of sorcerers that praise where they intend to do most mischief. And the occasion, the place, the manner, the person that gives the commendation make always a difference, and cause a great alteration in that matter. Nor is it less here. For, Mr. Howe having taken the pen on this subject, as The Discourse also observes, upon that honourable gentleman's command, the officious mentioning of Mr. Boyle, p. 1. seems as if *it* had a mind too to try his mettle; or at least would reproach him for having employed one so unfit for the service, and that was to be so shamefully (or rather shamelessly) treated for his performance.

But the sum of all *its* malice, whereby *it* endeavours to outlaw Mr. Howe, not only from Mr. Boyle's patronage, but from all Protestant protection, is to represent him under a Popish vizard. As, p. 2. "Old Popish arguments dressed up *a-la-mode*." "An averment of the old Popish calumny." "An affidavit of a pontifical accusation." "Trampling (p. 4.) on the venerable dust, which was sometimes animated by truly heroic souls, and bore the names of Zuinglius, Calvin, Beza, Penkins, Pemble, Twisse, Davenant, Ames," &c. Then, p. 12. still objects to him the opinion of Durandus, though Mr. Howe had in his Postscript so fully vindicated himself against it, that his first accuser hath let it fall out of perfect ingenuity: draws "a parallel between his and the Papists' arguments against predetermination:" and, p. 13, erects another pair of columns to that purpose, betwixt which Mr. Howe is to look out as through a pillory. After this, p. 14. saith, "the point under debate between *it* and Mr. Howe, is a stated controversy between the Papists and Protestants."

“ Gives *itself* a little pleasure mixed with disdain,” that because there was no smith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, he was fain to go down to the Philistines to sharpen his axe and his mattock, 1 Sam. xiii. 19, 20. “ Imitates Bradwardine’s piety, therefore entitling *its* book *de Causa Dei*, the cause of God being that which *it* designs to secure from the impetuous assaults of its adversaries, among which it is heartily sorry Mr. Howe should be numbered as to this instance.” This kind of proceeding does argue rather the strength of malice, than of the cause. For although we live under a rational jealousy always of Popery, yet whatsoever is said by any author of that persuasion, is not forthwith therefore to be clamorously rejected. Have not there constantly been among them, men fit to be owned for holy life, good sense, great learning? And in many points we agree with them, and shall in all, whensoever our eyes shall be shut, or theirs shall be opened. The Discourse had indeed done something to the purpose, could *it* have shown the doctrine of predetermination to be one of those discriminating causes upon which we have made a separation from that church, that it is an article of faith in which our creeds differ, and that it were a fit test to be imposed upon them in order to their more speedy conviction.

Which last, if *it* can bring about for them, so that they may be acquitted upon renouncing this doctrine imputed to them, (instead of the transubstantiation, which Mr. Howe, too, escaped so narrowly,) I presume they would, notwithstanding all the popery, take it for an high obligation. For, indeed, whereas The Discourse affirms this of predetermination to be “ a stated controversy betwixt the Papists and the Protestants;” the Papists against the Protestants for it; there is not through *its* whole book, a more notorious falsehood. For this debate arose first among the Papists, some of them being of one, others of the contrary opinion; so that the controversy was stated betwixt themselves. But that which is now T. D.’s was first the Dominican doctrine, and I wonder therefore the less if *it* continue herein the Dominican spirit: since, and from that original, the same argument hath indeed been also diffused among the Protestants, and they likewise have differed about it with one another; but it was never

taken, in holding it either way, to be the Protestant character. The predeterminative concurrence is not to be found in any Confession of the several Reformed churches; but this matter hath been left entire to every man's best judgment, and one party is as much Papist in it as the others. What two men of equal capacity can argue against predetermination, but they must have the same apprehensions in some measure, in matters so obvious? and it ought not to be improved to either's prejudice, no more than for two to speak the same words in discoursing of one subject. Charron, whose wisdom, p. 1; Bradwardine, whose piety, p. 14; and especially Cæsar Borgia, whose chalk, p. 15, T. D. makes use of, were none of the best Protestants: and yet I am far from taxing *it* therefore of Popery, "or giving myself a little pleasure mixed with disdain," that it was fain to go down to them to sharpen *its* hoe or *its* mattock. Let *it* rather solace *itself* in that lordly posture of mind; nor will I envy *it*, especially, seeing to take that satisfaction in a thing which *it* makes so criminous, is the only joy of which I think the evil spirits are capable.

And as to *its* saying, p. 2. "that Mr. Howe avers the old popish calumny, that by the Protestant doctrine God is made the author of sin;" and, p. 4. "that he tramples upon the venerable dust, &c. of Zuinglius, Calvin, Beza, Perkins, Pemble, Davenant, Twisse, Ames, &c.;" it proceeds from the same malice, and may therefore receive the same answer. For I have shown, first, that this predetermination is not the stated doctrine of Protestants, nor hath there yet any General Council of them been held, where T. D. hath presided; but if there should at any time hereafter, *it* is so unhappy and singular in expressing *its* sense in this matter, that I much fear lest the plurality of votes should affix the dangerous Greek name to *its* religion. And as to those worthies whom *it* cites by rote, *it* draws them indeed within the reach of both old and new calumny, by pretending they were of *its* opinion; whereas one may safely affirm at adventure, that they were all of them too well enlightened to have ever thought or spoken after *its* manner. What *it* may have extorted from them by necromancy, I know not; but they had not the happiness to have read *its* "De Causa Dei" in their

lifetime : nor do I think that death corrupts men's minds as their bodies. Of these, whom The Discourse enumerates, Calvin and Beza have been reproached and charged by Bellarmine and other Romanists, as making God the author of sin : but yet there is not to be found in all their works an assertion of God's determinative concurrence. How far some of the rest of them have taken scope on this subject, I have no obligation here more than The Discourse, to particularize ; neither did Mr. Howe name any man, as being the fairer way by much, arguing only against the opinion. But seeing T. D. hath made bold with Bishop Davenant, I will ask no better, for that truly venerable dust which *it* hath stirred will fly in T. D.'s eyes, if I be not mistaken. "Dissert. de Predestinatione et Reprobatione," it is thus, "*Deus, agens ex decreto predestinationis, operatur hæc priora (scil. fidem, sanctitatem, perseverantiam) per influxum gratiæ efficacis, at ex decreto reprobationis nihil agit quo deterior efficiatur reprobatus ;*" that is, for it is well worth the translating, "God, acting according to his decree of predestination, works these things in the first place (viz. faith, holiness and perseverance) by the influence of efficacious grace ; but, according to his decree of reprobation he acts nothing by which the reprobate should be made worse." Methinks, as T. D. will have the bishop to be of *its*, so, in all reason, *it* should be also of the bishop's opinion ; and if *it* intends no more, as Mr. Howe no less than is here said, I cannot see why there might not be an end of The Discourse, and of this controversy.

But however, I hope that I may have done a good work, if, upon sight of these unexpected remarks, Mr. Howe, though fitted doubtless for a much better and fuller reply, would deliberate before he makes this adversary so considerable as to blot paper on *its* occasion. Let *it*, in the meantime, venditate all *its* street adages, *its* odd ends of Latin, *its* broken shreds of poets, and *its* musty lumber of schoolmen. Let *it* enjoy the ingenuity of having unprovoked fallen upon a person, "whose parts *it* acknowledged," for whom *it* "had such an affection," with whom *it* "had so many years academical society," and so "long friendship : " but whom *it* now "must number among God's adversaries." Let *it* value *itself* upon these things ; for all these considerations do heighten the

price of an assassinate. But may Mr. Howe still continue his sobriety, simplicity, and equality of temper; glorifying God rather in the exercise of practical Christian virtues, than affecting the honour of a speculative question. But if he had a mind to be vindictive, there is no way to despise the adversary more sensibly, than, as clamorous women, by giving them no answer. Till men grow into a better humour, and learn to treat of Divinity more civilly, they are unfit for conversation.

Another, I see, who is now his third aggressor, hath already assaulted him, though less barbarously, in "A Letter to a Friend," &c. Yet even he introduces his book with Job xiii. 7. "Wilt thou speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him?" What shall Mr. Howe do in this case? Is the Bible therefore to be turned into a libel? and shall he "search the Scriptures" to find out a text equally cutting? He need not go far, were he of that mind, to retaliate. How easy were the parallel betwixt Job's three friends (to whom those words were spoken) and three such comfortable gentlemen! And why may not Mr. Howe nick them as well out of Job xii. 3, 4. "But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these? I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God and he answereth him: the just upright man is laughed to scorn." Or, if he would be yet severer, the same, ch. xiii. 4, 5. will hit them home: "But ye are forgers of lies; ye are all physicians of no value. O that you would altogether hold your peace, and it should be your wisdom." And then at last to determine the whole dispute, he might conclude with Job xlii. 7. "The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right as my servant Job hath." After all which, what more seasonable, in order to reconciliation, than the verse following? "Go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath." But the word of God is not so to be turned into the reproach of man,

though the allusion may seem never so happy; nor have I instanced thus far otherwise than to show the frivolousness, though too usual, of that practice.

But therefore I would advise Mr. Howe, though not to that excusable sullenness and silence, with which some have chastised the world for having used them unworthily; nor to that tacit contempt of his adversaries, in which he were hitherto justifiable; yet, that, having made a laudable attempt, of which several good men are it seems not capable, he would, for peace' sake, either wholly surcease this contest, or forbear at least till they have all done. For it is more easy to deal with them all than single; and, were they once embodied, come to a consistence among themselves, or had agreed who should speak for them, they had right to his answer. But until then, Mr. Howe is no more obliged in whatsoever is called honour, reason, or conscience, than if every hair of T. D.'s that stands on end, should demand particular satisfaction. It is the same for a divine, as he, to turn common disputant, as for an architect to saw timber, or cleave logs; which, though he may sometimes do for health or exercise, yet to be constant at it, were to debase and neglect his vocation. Mr. Howe hath work enough cut out of a nobler nature, in his "Living Temple,"* in which, like that of Solomon, there is "neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron to be heard," 1 Kings vi. 8, nothing that can offend, all to edify. And this I heartily wish that he may accomplish: but therefore, as he hath not hitherto sought, so that he would avoid all contention; lest, as David, for having been a man of blood, was forbid to build the temple, 1 Chron. xxii. 8. so he, as being a man of controversy.

As for myself, I expect in this litigious age, that some or other will sue me for having trespassed thus far on theological ground: but I have this for my plea, that I stepped over on no other reason than (which any man legally may do) to hinder one divine from offering violence to another. And, if I should be molested on that account, I doubt not but some of the Protestant clergy will be ready therefore to give me the like assistance.

* Only the first volume of "The Living Temple" was then published.—ED.

ON
THE ARIAN HYPOTHESIS
RESPECTING THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

BY ROBERT BALMER, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY TO THE UNITED
SECESSION CHURCH.

PREFATORY NOTICE.

ROBERT BALMER, the author of the five following dissertations, was born, of parents distinguished for their intelligence, piety and worth, on the 22d November 1787, in the parish of Eckford, Roxburghshire. He received his elementary education at a school in the parish of Crailing, and finished his preparations for the university at the grammar-school of Kelso. He entered the university of Edinburgh at the commencement of the session 1802-3, and studied there during four sessions before he sought admission to the divinity hall. In the autumn of the year 1806, after undergoing an examination by the Associate Presbytery of Selkirk, he was admitted to the study of divinity under the venerable Dr. George Lawson, professor of this branch of learning appointed by the Associate Synod, and completed the usual course of five annual sessions. Eager to avail himself of all means of improvement, he entered the divinity hall in the university of Edinburgh, and went through the course of study required for receiving license in the Established Church. During his academical course he supported himself by teaching. On finishing his preparatory studies, he carefully reviewed the grounds on which the ecclesiastical body with which he was connected had separated from the Established Church, and being satisfied that they were valid, offered himself as a candidate for license to the Associate Presbytery of Edinburgh in the close of 1811, and on the 4th August 1812 was by them licensed to preach the gospel. In the course of a few months he received calls to four several congregations, and the Associate Synod, at its meeting, September 1813, in conformity to his own judgment, appointed him to the congregation of Golden square, Berwick-on-Tweed. His ordination took place on the 23d March 1814. From the commencement of his ministry he was most ex-

emplary in the discharge of all his sacred functions, and took an active part in all the great enterprises of Christian benevolence which give so peculiar a character to our age. In September 1820, he, being moderator of the Associate Synod, in conjunction with the distinguished Dr. John Jamieson who was moderator of the General Associate Synod, presided at the auspicious union of the two large bodies of Presbyterian Seceders, commonly called Burghers and Antiburghers. In the year 1826 he entered into the marriage state with Miss Jane Scott of Aberdeen, by which his comfort and usefulness were greatly increased. In April 1834 he was chosen by the United Associate Synod to fill the chair of systematic theology which had become vacant by the death of the Rev. Dr. Dick, so well known by his Lectures on Divinity and other able works. In the spring of 1840 the university of St. Andrews conferred on him the honorary degree of doctor of divinity. In consequence of some remarks in a recommendatory preface which he prefixed to a reprint of a portion of Polhill's Treatise on the Divine Will, some of his brethren suspected him of entertaining views inconsistent with those embodied in the standard books of the Secession church, —the Westminster Assembly's Confession and Catechisms; and he and his senior colleague in the professorate, who had identified himself with him by declaring entire satisfaction with his views, were called to state their opinions on the topics in question before the Synod, October 1843. They did so—and the result was a finding that “scriptural harmony prevailed among the brethren.” An unsuccessful attempt was made to disturb this finding at the meeting of Synod May 1844. These movements made a painful impression on Dr. Balmer's sensitive mind, and in the opinion of his medical friends originated, or at any rate aggravated, the disease which brought him to what his friends could not help thinking an untimely grave. For a few weeks he had been in rather declining health, but on Thursday, June 26, 1844, alarming symptoms manifested themselves, and after a short season of great bodily affliction but perfect mental peace, he expired on the morning of Monday, July 1st. The statement on his tombstone is no exaggerated account of him.—“A man of high endowments, attainments, and worth; a sincere devout Christian; an accurate and elegant scholar; a learned and sound divine; an instructive and impressive preacher; a faithful and affectionate pastor; an able

and skilful tutor; an enlightened and ardent friend of liberty, order, and peace in the church and in the state; firm yet liberal in his principles; kind and generous in his dispositions; bland yet dignified in his demeanour; and in the discharge of all the duties of ecclesiastical, civil, social and domestic life, most conscientious." Dr. Balmer's publications during his lifetime were but few. The following is a correct list of them. A sermon on the resurrection in the volume of "Sermons by ministers of the Associate Synod." Address at the induction of the Rev. Robert Redpath. Delineation of the character of the Rev. Henry Belfrage, D.D., as an author, in his "Memoirs," by Drs. McKerrow and Macfarlane. Two Introductory Essays to republished Tracts by Howe and Polhill. A Discourse on the Reasons for the Early Removal of the righteous by death, on the death of Mrs. Margaret Fisher Brown. Sermons occasioned by the death of the Rev. David Paterson of Alnwick. Statement on Doctrinal points made before the United Associate Synod; and Essay on the Scriptural basis of Union among Christians. Besides these he published a number of articles in various periodical publications. After his death two volumes, one of them occupied with academical lectures, and the other with pulpit discourses, were published, in compliance with a strong and extensively expressed wish for some such memorial. They are every way worthy of the author, and are preceded by a biographical memoir from the pen of Dr. Henderson of Galashiels, which gives an accurate as well as a pleasing portrait, a striking but not overcharged likeness of his departed friend. It is owing to the kindness of my esteemed friend Mrs. Balmer, that I am enabled to present my readers with the five following valuable Tracts. They form five of his Academical Lectures, and are no more than a fair specimen of the manner in which he was accustomed to treat theological questions. If this series proceed, I hope to be able to gratify the wish which I am sure must be excited to see more of such precious remains.



ON THE ARIAN HYPOTHESIS

RESPECTING THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

WHETHER we consider the inherent plausibility of the Arian hypothesis of the person of Christ, or the respectability of many of its supporters, it seems entitled to more attention than it receives in the present age. I propose therefore to occupy this lecture with some remarks on that system. The lecture will be partly historical, and partly didactic or argumentative. I shall first, in a few sentences, give a brief account of the peculiar principles of the system; I shall next give a short history of it; and finally, I shall make some strictures upon it, adverting to the arguments which seem to support it, and stating the decisive objections to which it is liable.

The system takes its name from Arius, a divine who flourished about the beginning of the fourth century. It holds a middle place between Socinianism on the one hand, and the catholic or orthodox doctrine on the other. According to Arius, Jesus Christ is not a divine person in the proper sense of the term, and did not exist from eternity. He is, however, far superior not only to men but to the highest angels, and was created by God long before the commencement of time or the production of any other creature. It was farther maintained by Arius that that superangelic being was employed by God as an instrument, or subordinate agent, in the creation of the universe; and that the universe was placed under his administration. As Arius denied the proper divinity, so he denied also the real humanity of Christ; asserting that his body was animated and actuated not by a

human soul but by the Logos or superangelic being. It is only of this part of the system which relates to the person of Christ, that we are at present called to speak; it is, however, but right to add, that Arius and his followers maintained that Christ did not die as a sacrifice or propitiation for sin in the proper sense of the terms, but that for the reward of his obedience and sufferings he is exalted to be the Saviour and Judge of men, and empowered to dispense the blessings of salvation.

In consequence of the disputes occasioned by the promulgation of those opinions, it was found necessary to assemble a general council. This council, which met at Nice in 325, condemned the opinions of Arius, and ordered his writings to be burnt. He himself was banished by the command of the emperor; but after five years was recalled. Having delivered a confession of his faith, expressed in terms less offensive, to the church at Alexandria, whose bishop, the celebrated Athanasius, had been the most zealous of his opponents, was enjoined to receive him to the communion; but, as if by a special interference of Providence, Arius himself suddenly expired on the evening prior to the day on which he was to have been admitted to that privilege.

After his death, the opinions which he had been the first, if not to promulgate, at least to reduce to shape and order, continued long to agitate the church. They were embraced by bishops and emperors; his followers, if not more numerous, were often more powerful than those who professed the orthodox doctrine; and according to the testimony of some authors, (article *Arius*, 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' *) it was not till nearly 300 years after the death of its founder that the sect finally disappeared.

When the human mind awoke from the sleep of ages at

* I suspect there must be some mistake in this statement, as Dr. Hill asserts in his Lectures, vol. ii. p. 11, that "before the end of the fourth century the opinion of Arius was extirpated in the greater part of the Roman empire, and appears to have been so much forgotten that all the divines who write upon that subject after this period till the Reformation, are almost wholly employed, not in explaining or combating the Arian system, but in proposing different modifications of the orthodox doctrine."

the era of the Reformation, and when men began again to speculate freely on religion, and on other subjects, the Arian heresy was soon revived. It is thought by some that a predilection for it was cherished by the learned and celebrated Erasmus, the friend and correspondent of Luther, and by the not less learned and celebrated Grotius.

In our own country this doctrine has been held by several individuals distinguished for talents and learning;—some of whom have rendered most important services to the interests of Christianity. Among these may be mentioned Dr. Leland, Dr. Balguy, the author of various tracts theological and moral, and Dr. Henry Taylor, the author of the book entitled “Ben Mordecai’s Apology for embracing Christianity,” probably the most elaborate and imposing defence of Arianism that has ever been published. There is reason to apprehend that in addition to these writers, all of them connected with the established churches of England or Ireland, a considerable number of the English and Irish clergy of inferior note, have held substantially the same sentiments.

Soon after the Revolution in 1688, the Arian hypothesis respecting the person of Christ was adopted by James Peirce, an eminent dissenting minister at Exeter, and the author of a commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, and on several others of Paul’s Epistles,—a commentary distinguished by great ability and ingenuity, and well worth consulting, though constructed, like the commentaries of Locke and Whitby and Macknight, on low and secular principles. Through his influence, and that of his friend Hallet, who continued his commentary, Arianism became for a time the distinguishing tenet of that class of the English dissenters who adopted the Presbyterian form of church government.

It is not unworthy of notice, that within the last sixty or seventy years the Arian congregation which used to assemble at the Old Jewry in London, has possessed three ministers, all of them men of uncommon talents and learning. I refer to Dr. Price, Mr. Joseph Fawcett, and Dr. Abraham Rees. The first of these is the author of a judicious though dry and tedious work entitled “A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals;” of a volume of Sermons, intended

chiefly to expound and defend the Arian scheme, and of a volume of Theological Dissertations, one of which at least, that on Providence, deserves to be carefully perused by every student of divinity. The second is the author of two singularly eloquent and beautiful volumes of Sermons, chiefly on moral subjects, or on subjects of natural religion. Dr. Abraham Rees was the learned and laborious editor of the Encyclopedia which bears his name, and the author of two volumes of Sermons, which contain more Christian doctrine and more unction than the sermons of Blair and of many others whose professed creed was more orthodox.

"*Facilis descensus averni.*" Heretics, as well as "evil men and seducers," generally "wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." Of this assertion the history of Arianism among the English dissenters furnishes a most instructive exemplification. Eminent as were some of the first abettors of the system, not only for talents and learning, but for their private virtues, and their diligent study of the Scriptures, and even for devotional feeling of a certain kind, their successors have almost universally plunged into the gulf of Socinianism. It is understood, accordingly, that now there are not more than two or three Arian ministers, (it is uncertain if there are so many,) among the English dissenters. But though they have changed their doctrinal sentiments, they have retained their form of church government; and hence it happens that, in the southern part of the island, Presbyterians, and Socinians or Unitarians, are regarded as equivalent designations.

Perhaps it will be thought strange that in enumerating the more distinguished abettors of Arianism no notice has yet been taken of certain individuals still more illustrious, who have been suspected of a leaning towards that system, and who on that account have been recently claimed by Unitarians. I refer more particularly to Milton and Locke, to Sir Isaac Newton and Dr. Samuel Clarke. These individuals seem to hold an intermediate place between Arians and Trinitarians. It is their opinion that the Son of God derived his existence from the Father, and was in some respects inferior to the Father, and thus they deny his proper divinity. They yet admit that he existed from

eternity, and ascribe to him almighty power and unlimited knowledge, and other divine perfections. Their views are chargeable with a degree of crudeness and confusion and inconsistency, which may well excite our astonishment. At the same time, when we recollect that during the seventeenth century even those divines who asserted most strenuously the divinity of the Son were accustomed to speak of the Father as the fountain of deity, "*origo et fons deitatis*,"* it seems but reasonable to admit that the sentiments of the eminent individuals just mentioned approximated nearer to the orthodox than the Arian hypothesis. On another most important subject those individuals differed essentially from the Arians; for some, if not all of them, admitted the cardinal doctrine of the atonement; nor would it be easy to refer to more rational and scriptural statements of this doctrine than those contained in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and in the Sermons of Dr. Clarke.

That the individuals who held those sentiments should be claimed by Socinians as belonging to their party, can be regarded only as a piece of gross disingenuity and shameless effrontery. Even between Arians and Socinians, the distance is wide; but between those who admit that Jesus Christ possessed some if not all divine perfections, and is entitled to religious homage, and those who assert that he was a mere man, and that to worship him is idolatry; between those who assert that he died as a sacrifice for the sins of men, and those who deny that doctrine, the distance is almost immeasurable. Between the two "there is a great gulf fixed." Granting that the individuals referred to do not ascribe to the Son of God every divine attribute, that they maintained his inferiority to the Father, and that their notions are incongruous and inconsistent, still it is but fair to class them either by themselves, or with those between

* The doctrine of what is called "the communication of the divine essence from the Father to the Son," though now generally abandoned, has been held by recent as well as former assertors of the divinity of Christ. It was held by the late Mr. Hall of Bristol; and when the obvious objection was stated, that on this supposition the Son was not self-existent, he replied, I believe him to be eternally and necessarily existent, but not self-existent.

whose opinions and their own there is the nearest affinity. For the credit of not a few, both Arians and Semiarians, it may be added, that as they have differed widely from Socinians in their doctrinal sentiments, so there has often subsisted between the two an important practical distinction. While the more distinguished of recent Socinians or Unitarians have treated the word of God with virtual contempt, torturing its plainest and most momentous declarations, and have impiously asserted that they would not receive certain doctrines even on its authority; the latter, if we except their treatment of its statements on some subjects, certainly of primary importance, have often evinced for it no little respect, and have studied it with no little assiduity.

Having thus given a general view of the Arian hypothesis respecting the person of Christ, and having given also a few historical sketches relative to the more distinguished of its supporters, I proceed now to offer some strictures upon it. And I remark, first, that it is an hypothesis not altogether destitute of plausibility. The doctrine of the Trinity, of three persons and one God, is a doctrine which is not only mysterious and difficult, but which seems to involve a contradiction. The idea of a person and that of a being is said to be perfectly equivalent, absolutely identical; and then to affirm that God is one being but three persons, is to assert what is not only above reason, but what at least seems repugnant to it. Now with this difficulty, a difficulty obviously of vast magnitude, Arianism is not encumbered. According to it there is, in the strict and proper sense, only one being, one person, who has existed from eternity, who possesses infinite perfections; that being, or person, is the Father; to him the Son, in common with all other created intelligences, is indebted for his existence and for all his high and wondrous endowments.

If, when internally considered, the Arian hypothesis appears exempt from difficulties which attend the orthodox doctrine, and thus seems to recommend itself to reason as a scheme consistent and intelligible, it may seem also, at least in a superficial view, to derive countenance from the language of Scripture. However easy it may be to demonstrate that the doctrine of the true and proper deity of the

Son of God is the doctrine of Scripture, it cannot be denied that the general strain of its language represents him as subordinate to the Father. Perhaps, therefore, it is not wonderful that in the minds of some hasty and inattentive readers the impression is produced that personally as well as officially he is inferior to the first person of the godhead. While the general current of Scripture phraseology may not unnaturally convey an idea of that sort to a careless reader, it must be observed further that there are many particular expressions and declarations in Scripture which seem to refer not to his office but his nature; which represent, or seem to represent him as deriving his existence from the Father; and in that sense, as we have seen, they have been understood even by decided Trinitarians. But if he is indebted to the Father for his existence, the conclusion follows naturally, if not inevitably, that he did not exist from eternity, and consequently that he cannot be really and truly God.

It may therefore be conceded that in one view the Arian hypothesis of the person of Christ is not devoid of plausibility. But that concession is all that either justice or charity can claim; for it is only in a partial and superficial view that Arianism appears a specious system. If it is exempted from some difficulties which beset the orthodox or Calvinistic doctrine, it is, in its turn, encompassed by difficulties which are not only far more formidable, but which are absolutely insurmountable; and which will compel every candid and careful inquirer to reject it without hesitation. In proof of this assertion I shall endeavour to show first that it is an unscriptural, and next that it is an irrational system.

First, Arianism is an unscriptural system. It is so, because it is utterly repugnant to the whole body of the Scripture testimony respecting the divine dignity of the person of Christ. To offer at present anything like a summary of that testimony, or to attempt any formal proof of the true deity of Christ is neither proper nor practicable. It may be sufficient to observe that that fundamental doctrine is established by declarations which occur in every part of Scripture, declarations so numerous as to be almost incalculable,—so explicit and peremptory that they need no commentary or

criticism to make them teach that doctrine, nor can they be brought not to teach it without extreme violence. Not only is Jesus Christ frequently called God, but the term is applied to him conjoined with such epithets as demonstrate that it is applied to him in the highest and most proper sense. He is spoken of as "the mighty God," "the great God," "the true God," and as "God over all, blessed for ever." He is described as possessed of divine attributes, eternal pre-existence, almighty power, omnipresence and omniscience. He is represented as the Creator and Preserver, as the Ruler and Judge of the universe; and he is associated with the Father in receiving the worship and obedience of all ranks and orders of created intelligences. How then is it possible to doubt that he is truly God? And how do Arians attempt to set aside this accumulation of evidence? They do so by having recourse to criticisms and interpretations, almost all of which are unnatural and unsatisfactory, many of which seem uncandid and disingenuous, and not a few of which are ridiculous and absurd. They tell us, for example, that he is called God in an inferior sense; but can he be a subordinate deity who is described as the true, the mighty, the great God, and to whom is often applied the incommunicable name, Jehovah? They tell us that it was only as an instrument, or subordinate agent, that he was employed in the creation of the universe; that he created nothing in the strict sense of the term; that he did not give being to matter, but merely changed the form, and arranged the order of materials previously existing. But if so, with what propriety is it asserted that "all things were made by him," that "without him was nothing made that is made?" Or is the creation of matter more difficult than the creation or production of spirits, of substances endowed with far nobler powers and properties than material objects? and is it not said expressly, that "by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, &c.; and for him, and by him all things consist?" Can the creation and sustentation of all things be described in language more plain and emphatic? Admit then that creation was a work delegated to Christ, it would not have been delegated to him unless he had been

fully competent to it ; that is, unless he had possessed infinite power, and wisdom, and all other divine perfections.

But what shall we say in explanation of the undeniable fact that in Scripture the Son is generally represented as sustaining an inferior character, and as acting in subordination to the Father? We say that that is precisely what is to be expected ; for while he is personally equal, he is officially inferior to the Father ; and in the economy of redemption, and perhaps too in other operations, he acted as the Father's delegate and servant.

It must be allowed, however, that those passages which represent, or which seem at least to represent, him as deriving his existence from the Father, present a greater difficulty. Without entering into a particular examination of those passages, it may be remarked respecting them generally, that some of them probably refer to his official character and relations, some of them to the production of his human nature, and others to his resurrection from the dead. And it may be remarked that those of them which do refer to the mode of his existence as a divine person, and to his eternal relations to the Father, are usually employed in such a sense that instead of denying they imply his divinity. The common appellation, Son of God, for instance, is thus interpreted by the sacred writers themselves ; and even if those passages were more numerous and more difficult than they are, it would be contrary to the maxims of criticism and of common sense to interpret them in a way at all inconsistent with those other passages, incalculably more numerous, which either unequivocally assert, or necessarily involve the doctrine of his true and proper deity.

It thus appears that the Arian hypothesis is unscriptural, as being opposed to that host of Scripture testimonies which teach that Jesus Christ is a divine person,—a person possessed of all divine perfections and prerogatives and glories. It might be shown that it is an unscriptural hypothesis, as it is opposed also to those passages which teach his true and perfect humanity. That he had a human body is a fact of which almost every page of the evangelical history affords incontestable evidence ; and if any man who professes to recognise the authority of the New Testament, doubts that

fact, he may well be abandoned as the hopeless victim of an insane chimera.

That he had a human soul as well as a human body, if not a fact as plain and incontestable, is yet a fact which does not admit of reasonable dispute. On any other supposition the inspired writers would have been guilty of a palpable falsehood in calling him man, and the Son of man, for a human soul is as necessary a constituent in human nature as a human body. When it is said of Christ that "He grew in wisdom as well as in stature," that "His soul was exceedingly sorrowful," that He "commended his spirit into the hands of his Father," must not the expressions refer to a human soul, not an angelic or superangelic principle of whose nature and properties we are utterly ignorant? And is not he described as evincing the mental faculties and affections, as well as the corporeal qualities of a man; as not only subject to hunger and thirst, and weariness, and pain, but as experiencing emotions of satisfaction and displeasure, of hope and fear, of joy and grief; as tenderly sympathising with his friends, and entering into their multifarious sentiments and feelings? He possessed then a perfect human nature. But if so, Arianism must be a false and unscriptural system; for according to it he had a true body but not a human soul; the place of the latter being supplied by that superangelic principle produced before the creation of the visible universe. According to Arianism, therefore, those passages and expressions which the whole world, with the exception of an inconsiderable sect, have regarded as teaching unequivocally, the true and perfect humanity of Christ, teach virtually a gross and mischievous delusion.

Secondly, As Arianism is an unscriptural, so, in spite of all that its abettors allege to the contrary, it might be shown that it is also an irrational system. Is it not irrational to assert that the universe was created by a finite and created being, since reason and revelation concur in teaching us to regard creation as a work to which omnipotence only is competent, —a work peculiarly characteristic of God? Is it not irrational to assert that a creature is competent to govern and judge the world; and to rely on a finite arm for protection amid all dangers, for deliverance from all evils, and for the

bestowal of all the blessings that are needed either for the body or the soul, for time or eternity? And finally, is it not irrational as well as impious to render religious worship to any created intelligence, however glorious and exalted?

Such are some of the absurdities necessarily involved in the Arian hypothesis of the person of Christ; absurdities which its advocates labour to explain away, and which it is therefore charitable to believe they do not discern in all their magnitude; absurdities which ingenuity may somewhat soften or disguise, but which can never be annihilated or extinguished.

Perhaps it is proper to add, that though it might be illiberal and unjust to charge all the advocates of Arianism with an utter disregard of candour, or with a wilful rejection of evidence, many of them, like the person after whose name they are called, evinced a degree of disingenuity which merits the strongest reprehension. While rejecting in their true meaning the cardinal doctrines of the divinity and atonement of the Saviour of men, they have studiously employed the most elevated expressions when speaking of the dignity of his person and the efficacy of his death, as if to convey the impression that they admitted both those doctrines. Of a similar disingenuity some distinguished Socinians are guilty: and perhaps none to a greater extent than one living writer who makes great pretensions to honesty and fairness, Dr. Channing of Boston.

As the practical improvement of the preceding review, let us learn to hold fast our faith and our profession. Let us not imagine for a moment that we can cherish sentiments of reverence too deep, or gratitude too ardent for him who was "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

ON THE STRENGTH
OF THE
EVIDENCES FOR THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

BY ROBERT BALMER, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY TO THE UNITED
SECESSION CHURCH.

ON THE STRENGTH

OF THE

EVIDENCES FOR THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

THE object of the present discourse is not to adduce any new arguments for this cardinal doctrine, but to take a very brief review of the arguments usually adduced, and to show that these are not merely sufficient, but that they are characterised by great multiplicity and variety, and by great force and splendour.

To accomplish this task successfully it is necessary to begin with a statement of some preliminary remarks which must be kept steadily in view in the whole course of the discussion. It may be observed then, that just views respecting the true and exclusive object of religious worship lie evidently at the foundation of religion. This is a position which will be almost universally conceded, and which is too obvious to admit of dispute. One of the chief ends for which the Jews of old were separated from the rest of mankind was to preserve in the world the knowledge of the one living and true God ; and to distinguish him from all false divinities, was one of the leading designs of the Old Testament scriptures.

Such then being the importance of correct views of the proper object of religious worship, it was to be expected that no expression would be employed in Scripture likely to mislead men on a point so momentous. While, on the one hand, it was to be anticipated that if Jesus Christ were truly God, the doctrine would be stated frequently and unequivocally, it was to be anticipated on the other that if he was not God, not a single expression would be used which had the appear-

ance of ascribing to him divine perfections and prerogatives, or which was calculated to encourage the worship of him, and thus to seduce into the awful crime of idolatry. Keeping in view these momentous and incontestable principles, let us proceed to review shortly the proofs usually adduced to establish the doctrine of his true and proper deity.

The first proof, or class of proofs, is that deducible from the divine names which are given him. If he were not God, it is obviously highly improbable that he should be called God; or if called God, it was to be expected that the name would be applied to him in such a way as to indicate unequivocally, that it was applied to him, as to angels and magistrates, only in an improper or inferior acceptance. Not only, however, is it often given to him; it is given to him in conjunction with epithets which prove that it is applied to him in the highest and most proper sense. He is called not only God and Lord, but "the mighty God," "the true God," "the great God," and "God over all, blessed for ever." The incommunicable name, Jehovah, is also given him, besides other appellations characteristic of divinity. He is spoken of as "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the ending, the Almighty, he who is, who was, and who is to come."

If, on the supposition that Jesus Christ is not God, it be improbable that he should be called God, and that other divine names should be applied to him, it is evidently still more improbable, that the Scripture should not only apply to him such names, but ascribe to him also divine properties and perfections. This, however, it unquestionably does; and this it does, not in one instance, or in a few, but in many instances. He is represented as having existed from eternity; for it is said of him that "he was before all things," and that "he was in the beginning with God." He said of himself, "before Abraham was, I am;" and he calls himself "the first and the last, the beginning and the ending." Immensity or omnipresence is another divine attribute which is ascribed to him, or claimed by him. "No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst

of them." "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." With the attribute of omnipresence is intimately associated that of omniscience; and this attribute also is ascribed to him, or claimed by him, in language not less express. "No man," or no one "knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son; and he to whom the Son will reveal him." "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." "All the churches shall know that I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to his works." Perhaps there is no divine perfection that appears to us more characteristic of Deity, or that is better fitted to overawe our minds, than omnipotence or almighty power; but that perfection too is plainly ascribed to Jesus Christ. He is "the mighty God;" "the first and the last, the Almighty." "We look for the Saviour from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working (or the mighty energy) whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." I shall only add that immutability is another divine attribute ascribed to him; for of him it is said, "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever:" and to him it is said, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth; the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

Thus then it appears that the Scripture ascribes to Jesus Christ the attributes of eternity, or unbeginning existence; of immensity, or omnipresence; of omniscience, omnipotence, and immutability. But he who possesses these attributes, must be possessed of all divine attributes whatever, and consequently must be truly and properly God.

Incredible as it must seem that divine names and divine perfections should be ascribed to Jesus Christ, if he was not a divine person; difficult, or rather impossible, as it is to give any satisfactory explanation of the Scripture statements and expressions already quoted, these are not the only diffi-

culties which those who deny the Saviour's divinity have to encounter. There are other proofs of that doctrine which are perfectly conclusive, and which impart an immense accession of force to the preceding evidences. I go on, therefore, to remark, that divine works, works which God only can accomplish, are frequently ascribed to Jesus Christ.

As there is no perfection that appears to us more characteristic of Deity than almighty power, so there is no work that appears more characteristic of him, more evidently beyond the range of human might, than creation—the production of the universe out of nothing. Reason intimates that this is a work to which nothing short of infinite power was adequate; and revelation specifies that work as one which distinguishes the living and true God from all false divinities, and all created beings. “I am Jehovah, that maketh all things; that stretched forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.” But of that most stupendous work, Jesus Christ is frequently asserted in Scripture to be the author, and that in terms as strong and emphatic as human language can furnish. “All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” “He was in the world, and the world was made by him.” “By him are all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him.” And again, “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands.”

The preservation and government of the universe, though that may not strike our imaginations so forcibly, and though that may not awaken such profound emotions of amazement and awe, approve themselves to our reason as works competent only to the omnipotent Creator. But these works also are expressly attributed to him who for our salvation became obedient to the death of the cross. “By him all things consist.” “He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.” “Jesus Christ is Lord of all.” “All things are put under his feet.”

With the preservation and government of the world may not unnaturally be associated the resurrection of the dead,

and the final judgment. To reanimate the dead is a work not inferior to the original communication of life; and accordingly that is specified as the exclusive prerogative of the Almighty. "See now that I, even I, am he; I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." "God quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that be not as though they were." The judgment of the world is also a work which not only by right pertains exclusively to God, but to which none else than God is adequate. To pass a righteous sentence on any one man, every moral ingredient in every one of his thoughts, and words, and actions must be taken into account. Reflect then for a moment on the incalculable multiplicity of thoughts, and feelings, and volitions, which pass through the mind of even one individual, of the words uttered, and the deeds perpetrated by him in the course of an ordinary life,—think of the innumerable multitude of human beings which have already lived, or which shall live on earth, all of whom must be judged at the last day; and you will feel an overwhelming conviction that to pass a just sentence on one man, and much more on all men, requires the possession of boundless knowledge, of infinite wisdom, and infallible rectitude. But both in the resurrection of the dead, and in the administration of the final judgment, Jesus Christ is the grand and immediate agent. "I am," says he, "the resurrection and the life." "As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father."

In speaking of the divine works ascribed to Jesus Christ, I might have mentioned that the miracles which he wrought in the days of his flesh were many of them wrought in such a way as indicated that they were wrought not by a communicated but by an inherent power; and I might have mentioned that in his name his apostles wrought miracles after his departure from the world. But it would be inexpedient to enlarge; and therefore I shall dismiss this topic by remarking that Jesus Christ claims it as his high prerogative to perform the same divine works as the almighty

Father, and to perform them in the same divine or godlike manner. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise," that is, in the same manner as the Father doeth them.

To advert to the other proofs usually adduced to establish the doctrine of the supreme divinity of Christ may seem a work of supererogation; for if that doctrine be false, not only must the expressions and statements already quoted appear utterly inexplicable, but the book which contains them must appear a fable, and a fable not "cunningly devised," but clumsily contrived. It may serve, however, yet farther to display the abundance and variety, and the force and splendour of the evidence for the great doctrine in question, to remind you that not only are divine names, and attributes, and works, ascribed to Christ, but that divine worship is asserted to be due to him, and was actually rendered to him by men acting under an infallible guidance. It is in or into his name as well as into that of the Father that his disciples are baptized; in the apostolic benediction, the grace of the Son as well as the love of the Father is implored; in the primitive age, Christians were distinguished by the appellation of "those who called on the name of the Lord Jesus;" it is a divine appointment that all men should "honour the Son even as they honour the Father;" "all the angels of God" are commanded "to worship the First Begotten;" and with him who sits on the celestial throne are associated the Lamb in receiving the praises of the celestial hosts.

The preceding are the principal proofs for the divinity of Christ; but there are various auxiliary considerations which are not unworthy of attention. Such are the representations given of the unspeakable love of God in the mission of Christ, and of the love of Christ in interposing for our salvation; the representation given of the dominion and glory to which he is now elevated; and such too are the expressions of devout and adoring gratitude and transport with which his character and achievements are so often mentioned in Scripture. To these particulars, however, and to some

collateral particulars, it is sufficient barely to refer. Here, then, let us pause and mark some of the conclusions and inferences to which we have been conducted.

In calculating the amount of the evidence for the doctrine of the supreme divinity of Jesus Christ, it is but candid to admit that if the doctrine be true we might confidently anticipate that it would be supported by clear and abundant evidence. It is a doctrine possessed of such intrinsic grandeur and importance, so contrary in appearance to the divine unity,—so intimately connected with the dearest hopes and most momentous interests of mankind, that it would have been unreasonable to require an assent to it in doubtful statements, or in precarious presumptions. On the other hand, if this doctrine be false, it is obviously most mischievous; and therefore it is to be expected not less confidently that not the slightest countenance would be given it. To countenance it in any degree must have had a natural tendency to lead men to the perpetration of sins the most appalling, and to involve them in calamities the most disastrous. It would have encouraged them to transfer to a creature that homage which is due exclusively to the Creator; in other words, it would have encouraged them to be guilty of idolatry, and thus it would have entailed on them the vengeance of him who is a jealous God, and who has said not only that “he will not give his praise to graven images,” but that “he will not give his glory to another.” It would naturally have led to other deplorable consequences; for it would have encouraged men to expect from a finite and created being those inestimable and imperishable blessings which God only could bestow; and thus their hopes for eternity, instead of issuing in immortal happiness, would have terminated in the blackness of endless darkness.

We make then no unwarrantable assumption, when we take it for granted that if Jesus Christ had not been truly God, the slightest countenance would not have been given to any such idea in the Holy Scriptures. We may safely assume that it is highly improbable that a book, one principal object of which is to banish polytheism from the world, and to impart correct notions respecting the true object of religious worship, would not have contained a single declara-

tion sanctioning a doctrine so mischievous; that it is still more improbable that it should contain more than one such declaration; that it should contain many such declarations, is not only utterly improbable, but absolutely incredible. How then stands the fact? The divinity of Christ is supported, not by a single dubious text in Scripture, but by texts plain and explicit, and almost beyond number; not by one proof, or class of proofs, but by proofs of almost all possible or conceivable kinds. We may, therefore, not unfitly apply to it the remark which has been made respecting the kindred doctrine of the atonement. "It is so often asserted in the clearest terms; it is intermingled so closely with all the statements of truth and inculcations of duty throughout the Holy Scriptures, that to endeavour to exclude it from revelation is as hopeless an attempt as to separate colour from the rainbow, or extension from matter."

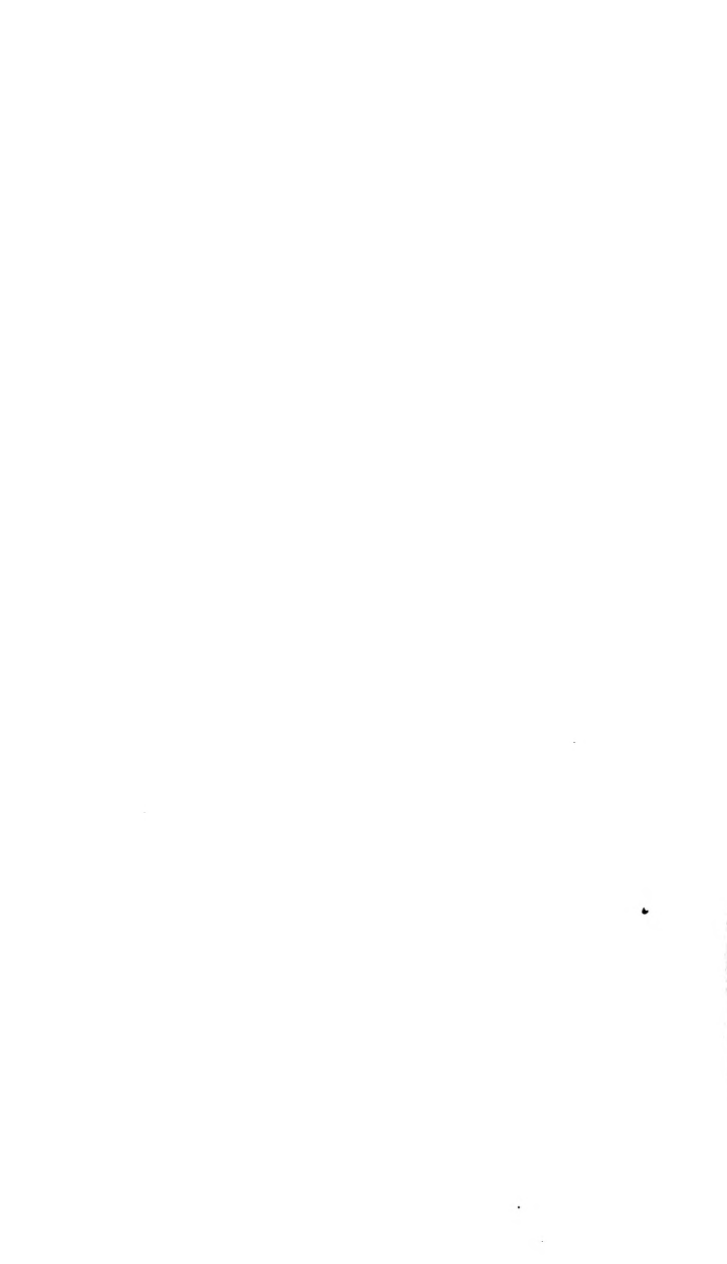
In the preceding syllabus of the proofs for the Saviour's divinity, I have purposely abstained from all critical remarks on the texts which I have had occasion to allude to or to quote. This abstinence, so far from impairing, ought to deepen and strengthen the conviction produced by the preceding statement. It is a fact which is universally admitted, and which is altogether unquestionable, that our English version of the Bible, taken as a whole, is characterised by extraordinary excellence, that it is eminently faithful and accurate. Suppose, then, for the sake of argument, that two or three of the texts which bear on the doctrine of the Saviour's divinity, might be more correctly rendered, is it credible that the great bulk, or that any large proportion of them, could have been utterly misapprehended by our translators? The thing is absolutely incredible. Suppose farther, for the sake of argument, a few of those texts to be somewhat ambiguous, to admit of a different sense, neither can this be alleged of any considerable number. To an unlearned reader, or a reader not versed in the mysteries of criticism, texts almost innumerable seem to assert the divinity of Christ, as plainly and explicitly as human language can assert any doctrine. And if such a reader were to try to expunge the doctrine from these texts, what would be the result of the experiment? Let him task his ingenuity to

the utmost, and still he would find himself completely baffled ; nor could he form any adequate idea beforehand of the artifices and evasions to which recourse has been had to compel these texts to give forth a different sound. What then is the conclusion which this fact irresistibly suggests ? It is this, that the Saviour's divinity is not only a Scriptural doctrine, but that it is emblazoned in the pages of revelation in characters so conspicuous that the most dim sighted can discern them. Or to vary the figure, it is interwoven so closely with the language of Scripture that it cannot be severed from that language without destroying its entire texture and substance ; and they who attempt to expunge it from the declarations in which it is embodied, wrest these declarations, as they "wrest the other scriptures, to their own destruction."

ON THE
PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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ON THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE personality of Jesus Christ is a doctrine so obvious and incontestable that it is admitted by all who admit the divine authority of the New Testament, by Arians and Socinians as well as by Trinitarians and Calvinists. In stating the proofs for his divinity, it was therefore unnecessary to adduce separate evidence to establish his personality. A different course must be pursued in discussing the arguments for the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Those who deny his divinity, deny also his personality; and assert generally that by the Spirit is to be understood merely an attribute, or influence, or operation. And hence it is necessary to prove first that he is a person, and next that he is a divine person.

If "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost,"—if no man can profess that truth, with proper views and feelings, without the teaching of the Spirit, not less necessary must be his teaching to enable us to believe and declare his own character and dignity. While it is proper then, in the investigation of all religious topics, to invoke his illuminating influences, it must be peculiarly proper to do this when entering on the consideration of those questions which relate more immediately to himself, to his personality, his divinity, his offices and operations. Let each of us, then, with becoming humility and devotion, adopt the language of the greatest of our poets.

"And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou knowest.
—————What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support."

Before entering on the doctrinal discussion of the question relative to the personality of the Holy Ghost, I shall make a few historical statements for the purpose of showing you the opinions of some eminent individuals by whom the doctrine has been doubted or denied.

It is remarked by Dr. Wardlaw, in his valuable "Discourses on the Socinian Controversy," that he supposes it will readily be admitted, "that if there be a plurality of persons at all in the one Godhead, that plurality is a Trinity. For," he adds, "although the views of the doctrine of the Trinity, held by those who have attempted to explain it, have been various; yet *Trinity* and *Unity*, (taking the latter term in the sense affixed to it by Antitrinitarians,) are properly the only [two?] hypotheses on the subject. All who believe the doctrine of a *plurality* to be taught in the Scriptures, believe that plurality to consist of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. None have believed in more,—none in fewer."

Accurate and extensive as is Dr. Wardlaw's information on the point connected with the Socinian controversy, the statements just quoted must be taken with some exceptions. In his work on the Holy Spirit, Dr. Owen refers to certain individuals belonging to the sect of the Quakers, whom he does not accuse of denying the divinity of Christ, but who joined with Socinians in denying the personality of the Holy Ghost. It is the opinion of Dr. Samuel Clarke that "the Holy Spirit of God does not in Scripture generally signify a mere power or operation of the Father, but more usually a real person; that that person is not self-existent, but derives his being from the Father by the Son; that as he is subordinate to the Father, so he is also in Scripture represented as subordinate to the Son, both by nature, and by the will of the Father, excepting only that he is described as being the conductor and guide of our Lord during his state of humiliation upon earth." Such are the principal propositions laid down by that writer in what he calls "the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity." For the most part, however, those authors which have rejected the deity have denied also the personality of the Spirit; maintaining that that appellation refers either to the Father, or to a divine influence or

attribute. It may be mentioned, as a fact somewhat curious, and which has been scarcely if at all noticed, that Dr. Young, the author of the "Night Thoughts," seems not to have made up his mind conclusively on this subject; for in one passage of that popular poem, he expresses his hesitation whether to address the Spirit as the same person as the Father, or as a delegated and inferior agent.

"O thou, bless'd Spirit! *whether* the supreme,
Great antemundane Father! in whose breast
Embryo creation, unborn being, dwelt,
And all its various revolutions roll'd
Present, though future, prior to themselves;
Whose breath can blow it into nought again,
Or from his throne some delegated power,
Who, studious of our peace, dost turn the thought
From vain and vile to solid and sublime!"

Utterly improbable as is the hypothesis that there are only two persons in the godhead, it was held for a time by a writer lately deceased, who, in most of theological questions, may well be regarded as "himself a host." The late Mr. Hall of Bristol, somewhere confesses that for a certain portion of his life he was a dualist, 'a believer in the doctrine of a duality of persons in the godhead;' and in the Memoir of him by Dr. Gregory, we meet with the following curious and instructive statements. "Early in the year 1799, a severe fever, which brought him, in his own apprehension, and that of his friends, to the brink of the grave, gave him an opportunity of experiencing the support yielded by the doctrines of the cross 'in the near views of death and judgment.' He 'never before felt his mind so calm and happy.' The impression was not only salutary, but abiding; and it again prompted him to the investigation of one or two points, with regard to which he had long felt himself floating in uncertainty. Although he had for some years steadily and earnestly enforced the necessity of divine influence in the transformation or character, and of perseverance in a course of consistent, holy obedience, yet he spoke of it as 'the influence of the Spirit of God,' and never in express terms, as 'the influence of the Holy Spirit.' The reason was, that though he fully believed the necessity of spiritual agency in commencing and continu-

ing the spiritual life, he doubted the doctrine of the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit. But about this time he was struck with the fact, that whenever in private prayer he was in the most deeply devotional frame, 'most overwhelmed with the sense that he was nothing, and God was all in all,' he always felt himself inclined to adopt a trinitarian doxology. This circumstance, occurring frequently, and more frequently meditated upon in a tone of honest and anxious inquiry, issued at length in a persuasion that the Holy Spirit is really and truly God, and not an emanation. It was not, however, until 1800, that he publicly included the personality of the Holy Spirit, in his statements of the doctrine of spiritual influence."

To a student of divinity, the information contained in the preceding extract is valuable, as affording a specimen of the doubts and errors by which minds the most vigorous, even though in some measure under the control of piety, may yet be perplexed; and as illustrating the necessity of a devotional spirit, and of a realizing sense of "the powers of the world to come," in order to the successful investigation of religious truth. It shows also that, evident and incontestable as seems the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit, it is a doctrine, a statement of the proofs of which ought not to be regarded as a labour altogether superfluous or impertinent.

In entering on this task, it is not necessary to attempt to give a formal or logical definition of the word person. It is more simple and intelligible than the terms subsistence, or mode of subsistence, by which it has been sometimes explained. A person is that of which personal properties may be predicated; and conveys in general the idea of an intelligent and voluntary agent.

Before adducing any direct proofs it will perhaps be more advantageous, if not as logical, to advert to objections usually urged against it. These being removed, the way will be cleared for bringing home to the mind the positive evidence in its native strength and force. The objections are all reducible to one; for it is the great aim of those who deny the doctrine of the personality of the Spirit, to show that the texts which assert or imply it are to be understood

figuratively, and that they refer not to a person but an attribute or influence. In corroboration of this supposition it is urged that attributes and qualities are often personified; and why then, it is demanded, may we not interpret the language of Scripture respecting the Holy Spirit on that principle, and understand it of the divine power or influence? That attributes and qualities, that inanimate objects and moral relations, and intellectual abstractions are often personified, both in the Holy Scriptures and in other writings, admits of no doubt. Thus it is said, "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse; in the opening of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words." Thus it is said of charity, "That it suffereth long, and is kind; that it envieth not; vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up." By the same figure, righteousness, sin, death, the grave, famine and pestilence, and other inanimate objects, are exhibited as possessed of life, and will, and active power. But these personifications are employed chiefly in those books or passages of Scripture which are poetical, or elevated at least considerably above the level of ordinary prose; taking into view the whole of Scripture, it will be found that the figurative use of such terms is far less frequent than the literal or the proper; where such terms are used figuratively, the meaning is generally so very obvious that no intelligent or attentive reader is in danger of misapprehending it. It is not only, however, in those books or passages which are poetical or oratorical, that the Spirit is represented as a person; he is thus represented also in passages which are historical and doctrinal; and in promises, laws, and exhortations, where plainness and precision are altogether indispensable. It is to be observed, also, that it is not in a few insulated or dubious texts that personal acts and properties are ascribed to the Spirit; the doctrine of his personality pervades the whole system of Scripture language respecting him; and that language has so little the aspect of being figurative, that not one reader in a hundred, if left merely to the guidance of his own judgment, would ever suspect that it is not to be taken in its strict and proper acceptance.

But are there not many instances in which the expressions,

“the Spirit,” and “the Holy Spirit,” are employed to denote divine gifts and influences? In what other sense can the terms be understood, when it is said, that the Spirit is “shed forth,” and “poured out;” and that believers are “baptized with the Spirit,” “anointed with the Spirit,” “sealed by the Spirit;” that they have the Spirit of God dwelling in them; and that they “live in the Spirit,” and “walk in the Spirit?” Admitting, it may be answered, that in those expressions the term Spirit refers directly or chiefly to his gifts and influences, they are no more inconsistent with his personality than similar expressions respecting the Father and the Son are inconsistent with their personality; or than similar expressions respecting human beings imply that they are not intelligent and voluntary agents. Often is God represented as “dwelling” in the saints; an expression evidently referring not to his essence or person, but to his influences and operations. In like manner, believers are described as “putting on Christ,” as having Christ “formed in them,” and “dwelling in their hearts,” as “walking” in him, and as “rooted” and “built up” in him; expressions which are manifestly metaphorical, and which refer to his character, or influence, or doctrine. Thus, too, it has been remarked, we often say of a son that he has in him much of his father; meaning merely that he has a striking resemblance to his father in his character and dispositions. In none of those instances, is the language employed intended to suggest a doubt, nor is it ever understood as suggesting a doubt of the personality of the agent spoken of. Equally consistent with the personality of the Spirit must be the expressions in which the Spirit is put for his gifts and influences; provided the doctrine of his personality can be established by a sufficiency of appropriate evidence. To the statement of that evidence I shall now proceed. I remark then,

First, That personal pronouns and appellations implying personality, are applied to him. The word *πνεῦμα* in Greek, like the word *spirit* in English, is neuter; but the Holy Spirit is frequently spoken of in the masculine gender, as a living and intelligent agent. “The Comforter, the Holy Ghost, which the Father will send in my name, *he* shall teach you all things.” “When *he*, the Spirit of truth is

come, *he* will guide you into all truth," or rather, all *the* truth; "for he shall not speak of himself." "*He* shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." The idea of personality seems to be necessarily implied also in the appellation "Comforter," or, as some would render it, monitor, or advocate; for, in contradistinction to Jesus Christ, the Spirit is represented as another Comforter, who was to supply the place of the Saviour. The same idea, if not necessarily implied in the term *spirit*, is naturally suggested by it; for though that term refers primarily to an inanimate substance denoting wind or breath, and though it is occasionally employed to signify an energy or influence, it is often applied also to the human soul and to other created spirits. And, therefore, when used with the definite article prefixed to it, and in reference to the Comforter whom the Saviour was to send, it seems but reasonable to understand it in its highest acceptation, as denoting an intelligent mind, or designing agent. Accordingly, it is asserted by Bishop Middleton, in his learned and elaborate treatise on the Greek article, that when the expression $\piνεῦμα ἁγιον$ is used with the article, it refers invariably to the person of the Spirit, or to the Spirit viewed as a person; and that when used without the article, it refers generally, if not invariably, to his gifts and influences. The reason, as he observes, would seem to be, that there being only one such person, the expression, when employed in reference to the Spirit personally considered, cannot be employed indefinitely, but may be thus employed in reference to his gifts and operations, because of them there is a vast variety.

Secondly, Attributes and actions characteristic of personality, are ascribed to the Spirit. These attributes and actions are so manifold and diversified, that to give a complete enumeration of them, would be a difficult, if not a tedious undertaking. It may be sufficient to mention that the Spirit is described as possessed of understanding, and will, and active power; as "coming" and "teaching," as "testifying" and "convincing," as "speaking" and "hearing," as "commanding" and "forbidding," as "making intercession," and as "knowing" and "searching the deep things of God." These are a specimen of the qualities and operations predi-

cated in Scripture of the Holy Spirit ; and they are evidently the qualities and operations of a person ; “ requiring,” as Dr. Paley expresses it, when treating of the personality of the Deity, “ requiring a centre in which perceptions unite, and from which volitions flow.” And here it may be remarked further that the Spirit is represented as possessed of the passive as well as the active attributes of personality ; as susceptible of those emotions and affections which can be felt by a person, not by an influence, or by an object devoid of life and sensation. “ They vexed his Holy Spirit.” “ Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.”

Thirdly, The Spirit is represented as the object of such affections and actions on the part of others as betoken personality. He is described as “ tried and tempted,” as “ rebelled against ” and “ resisted ; ” as “ blasphemed,” as “ spoken against,” and as “ lied unto.” All, or almost all these actions, viewed as the actions of intelligent agents, can terminate only in an intelligent agent ; on a substance endowed with consciousness and intelligence, and capable of volition, emotion, and action.

Such are the attributes and operations ascribed to the Spirit. On a certain occasion it is said respecting the Saviour, in reply to a most malignant insinuation advanced by his enemies : “ These are not the words of a devil ; can a devil open the eyes of the blind ? ” May we not accommodate this language to the Spirit, and say : These are not the qualities and actions of an attribute. Can an attribute speak and hear, judge and know and will, convince and testify, forbid and command ? Can an attribute be grieved and provoked and sinned against ; lied unto and blasphemed ?

The preceding arguments are perfectly sufficient to establish the point to be proved. I go on, however, to remark, that the personality of the Spirit is decisively proved, *Fourthly*, By the manner in which he is associated in Scripture with the other persons of the godhead. He is often represented as conjoined with the Father or the Son, or with both, in their operations and honours ; and the inference is therefore irresistible, that if they are persons he also is a person. As an unequivocal example of this conjunction, the form of baptism prescribed by Christ, and the apostolic benediction, will

naturally suggest themselves to you all. To these examples you may add the account given of the appearance of the Spirit at the Saviour's baptism. Another example, still more decisive, is supplied by the passage mentioning the sin of blasphemy against the Spirit. "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." It seems scarcely possible to read this solemn and alarming declaration, and not to be convinced that the Holy Ghost is as truly a person as the Son of man, and a person not inferior to the Son of man in rank and dignity. An additional instance in which the Spirit is associated as a person with the Father and the Son, may be found in the account given in the first epistle to the Corinthians, of those miraculous gifts and operations by which the gospel was signalised and attested at its first promulgation. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all." Somewhat similar, though perhaps not equally explicit, is the view given in the epistle to the Hebrews, of the respective agencies of each of the divine persons in reference to the introduction of the gospel. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

Passages might have been produced from the Old Testament exhibiting traces of a similar phraseology, passages which imply not merely that there is a plurality of persons in the godhead, but that the Spirit is one of those persons, —an agent possessed of the same divine attributes and prerogatives as the Father and the Son, or as Jehovah and the Messiah; and associating him in their honours and operations. Thus, for instance, it is said, "And now the Lord God, and his Spirit hath sent me." And again, says the Messiah, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me." But, as was to be expected, the testi-

mony of the Old Testament on this subject is less clear and precise, as well as less copious than that of the New; and as the evidence already adduced is abundantly sufficient, it would perhaps be impolitic to run the risk of impairing or obstructing the impression which it can scarcely fail to produce by insisting on proofs which are less satisfactory.

In the passages now quoted from the New Testament, and in many others that might have been quoted, the Spirit is distinguished both from the Son, and from the Father; and the inference is therefore unavoidable that he is neither the Son nor the Father. But in the greater number, if not in all of those passages, the Spirit is associated with the Son and the Father, as sustaining an equal share in their honours and operations; and therefore, like each of them, he must be a person, and a person the same in nature, and co-ordinate in rank and dignity.

To the preceding arguments I shall add a few miscellaneous expressions and passages in which the Spirit is distinguished both from the other persons of the godhead, and for divine gifts and influences; and which serve therefore to establish the doctrine of his personality. When the appellation, "Spirit of God," refers to a person, that person, it has been alleged, is just God himself; or if not the Father, the Son. Without going so far as to assert that the appellation *Spirit* is never used in reference to either of these divine persons, let me apply the general canon just stated to the descriptions given of the Spirit in the Saviour's valedictory discourse. The Spirit or Comforter there promised, is most explicitly represented as a person. Now of that person it is said that the "Father would send him in the name of the Son;" and that the "Son would send him from the Father." But the person sent must be distinct from the person or persons who send him. The Comforter, then, cannot be either the Father or the Son. It is farther said of him: "He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak;" language utterly inapplicable to the Father; for whatsoever the Father does he does of himself, not as the messenger or servant of another. Nor can the Spirit be identified with the Son, for it is immediately added, "He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and show it unto

you." The Son was to "go away;" but the Spirit was "another Comforter, who was to remain with the disciples for ever."

Again, attempts have been made, as we have seen, to confound the Spirit with his gifts; and to prove that the Spirit of God, if not put for God himself, must mean divine gifts or operations. Let us try this hypothesis by a few of the passages which mention spiritual gifts; and we shall soon perceive that it is utterly untenable. In 1st Corinthians 12th chapter, we have the amplest account any where given of the miraculous gifts and powers by which the gospel at first was accredited and signalized. In the very commencement, however, of that account, the Spirit is distinguished both from the Father and the Son on the one hand, and from his own powers and operations on the other. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations or works, but it is the same God who worketh all in all." Nor are these remarkable expressions the only ones in this chapter, in which the Spirit is distinguished both from the other divine persons, and from his own gifts and operations. "No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed; and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit." And again; "all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." In the first of these texts the Spirit is distinguished from the other divine persons; and in the second he is distinguished from the gifts which he imparts, and from the operations which he performs. The same distinction is elsewhere made, made in a way so conspicuous that the most inattentive reader can scarcely fail to remark it. "The great salvation began to be spoken by the Lord," by the second person of the godhead; "God himself," that is obviously the Father, "bearing him witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost,"—those gifts of wisdom, and knowledge, and faith, and healing, and prophecy, and interpretation, of which the Spirit is the immediate dispenser.

It would not be difficult to add to these proofs and illustrations; but to do so would be to "multiply words without

cause." A sufficient number of texts has already been produced, which if understood in their natural and obvious acceptation, teach unequivocally the doctrine which it is proposed to establish; and before that doctrine can be expunged from them, principles of interpretation must be adopted repugnant not only to the ordinary laws of criticism, but to the dictates of common sense. I shall therefore close the discussion with the following quotation from Dr. Owen's Treatise on the Holy Spirit; a quotation which presents a striking exposure of the ineptitude of the evasions resorted to for the purpose of escaping from the arguments for the personality of the Spirit, and which are characterized by a greater portion of force and pertinency than generally distinguish the reasonings and illustrations of that author.

"If," says he, "a sober, wise, and honest man should come and tell you, that in such a country where he hath been, there is one who is the governor of it, that doth well discharge his office; that he heareth causes, discerneth right, distributes justice, relieves the poor, comforts them that are in distress; supposing you give him that credit which honesty, wisdom, and sobriety would deserve, do you not believe that he intended a righteous, wise, diligent, intelligent person, discharging the office of a governor? What else could any man living imagine? But now, suppose that another unknown person, or as far as he was known, justly suspected of deceit and forgery, should come to you, and tell you, that all which the other informed you, and acquainted you withal, was indeed true; but that the words which he spake have quite another intention. For, it was not a man, or any person, that he intended, but it was the sun or the wind that he meant by all which he spake of him. For whereas the sun, by his benign influences, doth make a country fruitful and temperate, suited to the relief and comfort of all that dwell therein, and disposeth the minds of the inhabitants unto mutual kindness and benignity; he described those things figuratively unto you, under the notion of a righteous governor, and those actions, although he never gave you the least intimation of any such intention. Must you not now believe, either that the first person, whom you know to be a wise, sober, and honest man, was a notorious trifler, and de-

signed your ruin if you were to order any of your occasions according to his report; or that your latter informer, whom you have just reason to suspect of falsehood and deceit in other things, hath endeavoured to abuse both him and you; to render his veracity suspected, and to spoil all your designs grounded thereon. One of these you must certainly conclude upon. And it is no otherwise in this case. The Scripture informs us that the Holy Ghost rules in and over the church of God, appointing overseers of it under him; that he discerns and judgeth all things; that he comforteth them that are faint, strengtheneth them that are weak, is grieved with them, and provoked by them who sin; and that in all these, and in other things of the like nature innumerable, he worketh, ordereth, and disposeth all according to the counsel of his will. Hereupon it directeth us so to order our conversation towards [the Spirit of?] God, that we do not grieve him nor displease him, telling us thereon, what great thing he will do for us, on which we may lay the stress of our obedience and salvation. Can any man possibly that gives credit to the testimony thus proposed in the Scripture, conceive any otherwise of that Spirit, but as of an holy, wise, intelligent person? Now, whilst we are under the power of those apprehensions, there come unto us some men, Socinians or Quakers, whom we have just cause, on many other accounts, to suspect at least of deceit and falsehood, and confidently tell us that what the Scripture speaks concerning the Holy Spirit is indeed true; but that in and by all the expressions which it useth concerning him, it intendeth no such person as it seems to do, but an accident, a quality, an effect, an influence of the power of God, which figuratively doth all these things mentioned; namely, that hath a will figuratively, and understanding figuratively, discerneth and judgeth figuratively, is sinned against figuratively, and so of all that is said of him. Can any man, that is not forsaken of all natural reason as well as spiritual light, choose now to determine that either the Scripture designed to draw him into errors and mistakes about the principal concerns of his soul, and so to ruin him eternally; or that those persons who would impose such a sense upon it, are indeed corrupt seducers, that seek to overthrow his faith and comforts? Such will they at last appear to be."

ON THE
DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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ON THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

HAVING stated, at considerable length, the proofs for the personality of the Holy Spirit, I proceed now to establish the doctrine of his divinity. In entering on this topic, candour requires us to allow that the evidence for the divinity of the Spirit is by no means so ample as that which we possess for the divinity of the Son of God ; but candour suggests also that the divinity of the former may be received on inferior evidence. The grand difficulty in the way of admitting the divinity of either of these persons is found in the fact of the divine unity, in the seemingly contradictory nature of the doctrine. But if once we admit the deity of the Son, that difficulty is surmounted ; we admit a plurality of persons in the godhead, and we can with equal facility admit that that plurality may comprehend three as two.

Though the proofs for the divinity of the third person of the godhead are not so numerous and explicit as those for the divinity of the second, it is not to be inferred from this that they are defective or inadequate. On the contrary, even when viewed by themselves they ought to command our unreserved assent ; and they appear still more satisfactory when taken in connexion with the other. In stating them I shall follow nearly the same order as that observed in discussing the doctrine of the Saviour's divinity.

1. I remark then, first, that divine names are often applied to the Holy Spirit. He is called God ; and no hint is given that that name is applied to him in an improper or inferior acceptation. In proof of this position, I appeal first to a passage which has frequently been appealed to for this purpose ; Acts v. 3, 4, where Peter says to Ananias, " Why

hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?—thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” The Holy Ghost is here evidently represented as a person, and as the author of the supernatural influence imparted to the apostles. He is represented also as a divine person: for it is asserted that to lie to him was to lie to God. But, it may be said, supposing the Spirit to have been a subordinate deity employed as a messenger by the supreme Potentate, might not Ananias in lying to him be said to lie to God, on the same principle in which an insult offered to an ambassador is considered as directed against his sovereign, or in which the Saviour said to his apostles: “He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me?” This view of Peter’s language would have possessed some plausibility if we had had any evidence for the existence of such a subordinate deity, or if the Spirit had nowhere else been represented as God. But of subordinate deities the Scripture knows nothing; and we can produce at least a hundred other passages in which the Spirit is represented as a divine person. And to all this it may be added that if the Holy Ghost had not been God, the proper expression for Peter to employ in order to point out to Ananias the magnitude of his guilt, would have been, *Thou hast lied not unto the Holy Ghost, but unto God.* Such language, however, strikes us as utterly unnatural, as repugnant to the whole current of Scripture phraseology. On the whole, then, the common view of Peter’s expressions approves itself as the just one; and the natural and necessary conclusion seems to be that the names God and the Holy Ghost are used of one and the same person, and that that person is really and truly divine.

An instance of a parallel nature occurs in 1 Cor. iii. 16: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” as compared with chap. vi. 19, “What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which ye have of God?” Here also the Spirit is called God, at least virtually and by implication, if not formally and explicitly. In allusion to the temple at Jerusalem, believers are called the temple of God; they are so called because the Holy Spirit dwells in them. But if the

Holy Spirit were a creature, could it be said with truth that they were the temple of the living God? Would not the language, on this supposition, be most improper and most dangerous, as naturally tending to mislead on a subject of fundamental importance? But farther, Christians are called also the temple of the Holy Ghost. And does Christianity acknowledge any one who is not truly God, as the proprietor and inhabitant of the temple of the human person; and consequently as the proper object of human worship. If it does, it must itself be a modification of polytheism, one of those systems which it is its professed object to exterminate from the world.

The incommunicable name, Jehovah, is usually, and perhaps justly, regarded as still more certainly characteristic of Deity than even the appellation God. But that name, also, is more than once applied to the Holy Ghost. As a specimen I may refer to Isaiah vi. 8—10, "I heard the voice of the Lord," or of Jehovah, "saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, and understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy," &c. At first view, it might seem that this passage refers most naturally to God the Father; and yet in the New Testament it is applied both to the Son and the Spirit. It is applied to the Son; for it is quoted in John xii. 40; and then it is added, ver. 41, "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." It is applied to the Spirit; where says Paul in Acts xxviii. 25—27, "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto your fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand," &c. How are we to account for these different and seemingly inconsistent applications of the same passage? The only satisfactory explanation appears to be this, that the name Jehovah, as used by the evangelical prophet, is applicable to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that the commission given to him proceeded from each of them; an explanation rendered the more probable, that the plural as well as the singular number is employed respecting the author of the commission,—“Whom

shall *I* send, and who will go for *us*?" But if this explanation be the correct one, (and no other seems either admissible or conceivable,) the Son, and the Spirit, as well as the Father, must be each truly God; and, as such, must be entitled to that great and dreadful name, which expresses self-existence and infinite perfection.

2. I proceed next to the proof of the divinity of the Spirit found in the perfections ascribed to him; a proof of which it may be remarked, as of the preceding, that if not so strong and clear as some would have anticipated, it is yet such as may serve considerably to strengthen our faith. If the scripture does not ascribe to him in express terms all, it ascribes to him several divine perfections in language most plain and unequivocal; and the ascription to him of any one divine attribute proves that he is possessed of every other, and consequently that he is truly God.

As a specimen of the passages referred to I appeal first to the sublime and beautiful description in Psalm cxxxix. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me." On this passage I would observe that if we had not known the Holy Spirit to be a person, we should not unnaturally have supposed that the *Spirit* of God, like the *presence* of God, referred either to God himself, or to the divine immensity; but since the distinct personality of the Spirit is abundantly established by other evidence, it is surely not unreasonable to underseand the expression of him; and thus understood, it proves incontestably his omnipresence and immensity. The doctrine of the omnipresence of the Spirit seems also to be necessarily implied in the texts referred to under the preceding particular, in which believers are described as "temples of the Holy Ghost;" and in those texts too in which he is represented as dwelling with all genuine Christians, and as compensating the loss of the Saviour's sensible presence. It is true indeed that to be present in every region of the earth is not exactly the same thing as to be present in every part of the universe. But the earth, insignificant as it seems amid

the immensity of the universe, is yet so extensive that all who allow the Spirit of God to be present in every part of the former, will admit most readily that he is present in every part of the latter; just as it will be admitted that the power which was competent to the production of the globe and its inhabitants, is adequate to the production of the whole assemblage of created things.

Nearly allied to the attribute of immensity or omnipresence is the attribute of omniscience; and that is an attribute ascribed to the Spirit in language most express and emphatic. "But, as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart or mind of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 9—11. In these verses, even as they stand in our translation, the attribute of infinite knowledge is plainly ascribed to the Spirit; for it is asserted that he "searches all things, yea the deep things of God;" and that he knows the things of God, just as the spirit of a man is conscious of its own thoughts and purposes. It is often asserted in Scripture that the counsels and ways of God are unsearchable: but the Spirit of God searches and knows them all.

Strong as are the expressions employed in our version of this remarkable passage, some of the expressions in the original are stronger still. The term rendered "the things," in the phrases "the things of a man," and "the things of God," is the Greek article in the plural, *τὰ*, without a substantive; and the substantive to be supplied is that which is used in the preceding verse, *τὰ βάθη*, not "the things," but the depths or deep things. In like manner, the word in the original which is rendered "no man" is *οὐδεὶς*, no one, that is, no created being. The whole sentence ought therefore to be thus translated; "For what man knoweth the depths of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the depths of God knoweth no one but the Spirit of God." Must not that person then be absolutely omniscient whose know-

ledge of the profoundest mysteries, of the most complex plans, of the divine understanding, of the divine nature of the most secret purposes of the divine will, is so complete and so accurate that one of the fittest similitudes by which to illustrate it is the consciousness which the human spirit possesses of its own thoughts and purposes.

It were irrelevant to object, as some have done, to the argument founded on this passage, that as the spirit of a man is just the man himself, so the Spirit of God must just be God himself. The objection is irrelevant and futile for this reason, that it has already been demonstrated that the Spirit is a person distinct both from the Father and the Son; and for this additional reason, that in the immediate context the Spirit is expressly spoken of as a distinct person. "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of or from God," τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ; that is, the Spirit which the Father was to send agreeably to the promise and in virtue of the intercession of the Son.

It might have been remarked that there are other texts which seem evidently to recognise the omniscience of the Spirit. Such is the passage in Isaiah xl. 13, 14: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?"

I shall conclude this particular by adverting briefly to a few texts and expressions which seem to ascribe to the Spirit some other divine perfections besides those already specified, which furnish their fragments of evidence, if not complete and conclusive proofs, for the doctrine under consideration. The expression in Hebrews ix. 14, "Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot," &c., has often been applied to the Holy Ghost, and adduced as an argument to prove his eternity. The argument, however, is exceedingly problematical; for it is more natural to understand the term Spirit in this passage in the sense in which it is unquestionably employed in some other passages in the New Testament, as referring to the divine nature of the Saviour. But it may be observed that when the Holy Ghost is called "*the good*

Spirit," and still more when he is called, as he is often pre-eminently and emphatically called, "the *Holy* Spirit," both these epithets seem to be employed in that absolute and unlimited sense in which the former is used by the Saviour when he said, "There is none good but one, that is God."

Perhaps there is none of the divine attributes which is better fitted to impress the human mind with astonishment and awe, or which seems more certainly characteristic of divinity, than almighty power. If this attribute is not ascribed to the Spirit in express terms, it is necessarily implied in the works and operations ascribed to him; and to the consideration of these let us now proceed.

3. Here we may remark first, that his agency is represented as concerned in the stupendous work of creation. "The Spirit of God," says Moses, "moved on the face of the waters." "By his Spirit," says Job, "he hath garnished the heavens." "The Spirit of God hath made me," says Elihu, "the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." And, says the Psalmist, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath," or spirit, "of his mouth." On these statements, as on some formerly quoted, it may be remarked that, in the absence of all other evidence, it would have been difficult to prove that the Spirit mentioned in them is not to be understood of some influence or instrument, but that knowing from other evidence that the Spirit is a person, it seems evidently natural and reasonable to apply them to him.

In proof of the divinity of the Spirit it may next be mentioned that he was the grand agent in one of the most wonderful of all the divine works, namely in the production of the human nature of the Saviour. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." In this remarkable text, the incarnation of Christ, a work which is elsewhere attributed both to the Father and the Son, is not only attributed to the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost is called, or seems to be called, "the Power of the Highest," as if to intimate that all the resources of omnipotence were deposited with him.

To the agency of the Spirit also we are taught to trace the eminent endowments which adorned the Saviour's human soul, and the miracles which he wrought during his personal ministry. "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah xi. 2.) "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." (Matt. xii. 28.) The Spirit, too, is frequently represented as the proper agent in the miracles wrought by the apostles after the ascension of their Master; and as the author of all those miraculous gifts, so splendid and varied, imparted to them, and to many of their converts. "I will not dare," says Paul, "to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, *by the power of the Spirit of God.*" (Rom. xv. 18, 19.) "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." (1 Cor. xii. 11.) Each of the gifts and operations referred to in these passages, bespeaks a control over the faculties of the human mind, or the laws of the material world, not inferior to that which is implied in the creation of those faculties, and the enactment of those laws; and each of them, therefore, betokens divinity. Accordingly, in the text last quoted, sovereign will and omnipotent power are ascribed to the Spirit almost in express terms: "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit."

A work of a kindred character to those last mentioned, is the supernatural revelation of the divine will, or the illumination of those inspired men who were honoured to promulgate to others the counsels of the Almighty. This was evidently a work demanding a perfect and infallible knowledge of the divine mind; demanding, in other words, the possession of omniscience. But it is the Spirit who illumined the understandings, and guided the pens and the tongues both of prophets and apostles. "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was on my tongue." (2 Sam. xxii. 2.) "Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas." (Acts i. 16.) "Searching what,

or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow." (1 Peter i. 11.) "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. i. 21.) "Which things," says an apostle, in the name of his brethren and fellow-labourers, "which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." (1 Cor. ii. 13.) From these quotations it appears that we must trace to the inspiring afflatus of the Spirit not only the histories and doctrines and precepts of the New Testament, but the whole body of prophecy and of religious instruction contained in the Old, and comprehending much which the human authors have not attributed to him; the history not formally, or in express terms. Hence the common formula in quoting from the Old Testament, "The Holy Ghost saith;" and hence it is said even of those messages in the New which proceeded from the mouth of Christ himself: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." To him also we are taught to trace all the multitudinous ordinances and arrangements of the Mosaic economy; and we are farther taught that however imperfectly those ordinances and arrangements were anciently understood, and however frivolous and obscure they appear to us, there is in each of them a hidden meaning and design not unworthy of their divine author. "The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing."

The renovation of the human soul after the divine image is a work which, if less splendid and striking, is not less difficult or important than the communication of miraculous gifts or of preternatural knowledge. It implies not merely a power to influence its opinions and volitions, a power which is possessed by other created spirits both good and bad, but a power to effect a radical change in its moral frame and constitution, and to wield a resistless control over all its faculties and affections. It would seem, then, to be a work which, not less than the creation and arrangement of the material universe, requires almighty power, and unlimited

knowledge, and unerring wisdom. If none else than an omnipotent agent could have said with effect, "Let there be light," or reduced the material chaos to an orderly and beautiful world, or produced animal life in its humblest forms, none else surely can command spiritual light to dawn on the darkness of the human soul, or rectify and purify its turbulent and depraved principles, or infuse into it that spiritual life which will run parallel with eternity, and capacitate it for sharing in the felicity of the uncreated Fountain of being and bliss. Reason itself seems thus to intimate that

"The transformation of apostate man
From fool to wise, from earthly to divine,
Is work for him that made him."

On this point, however, the testimony of revelation is clear and unambiguous. To convey an idea of the magnitude and importance of the change implied in the moral renovation of the soul, the Scripture not only represents it as a resurrection from the dead, as a second birth, and a new creation,—works to which omnipotence only is commensurate, but it intimates expressly that it is an effect the production of which demands a divine agent. "Now he who hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." He who hath produced in us that temper of mind must be divine; the quality of the work betokens the character of its author. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." It is, in fact, to divine influence that we are instructed to trace all that is spiritually good in man, "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works." "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from above." "Without me ye can do nothing." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above."

While the moral renovation of the soul is often ascribed to God the Father as the originator of the stupendous scheme of grace and redemption, the Spirit is represented at the same time as the proximate agent not only in the primary infusion of spiritual life, but in all the subsequent changes and processes comprehended in the progressive purification and in the complete and final sanctification of the believer.

Is it said that they who receive the Saviour are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," and "that of his own will the Father of light begat us with the word of truth?" it is said also that they are "born of the Spirit," that they "are saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Is it said that God works in believers "both to will and to do?" it is intimated also that the Spirit "helps their infirmities, making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered," and that all the virtues which they possess or exemplify are "fruits of the Spirit." Is it said that they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation?" it is said also that they are "sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, unto the day of redemption." It thus appears that all those gracious operations which are comprehended in the application of the Christian salvation, and which are often ascribed to the Father, and mentioned as characteristic of divinity, are ascribed to the immediate agency of the Spirit; and we are thus taught to regard the Spirit as a person possessed of sovereign will, of almighty power, of unlimited knowledge, of unerring wisdom, of boundless goodness, of manifold grace, and consequently of all other divine perfections and glories.

The resurrection of the body is not in itself a work greater or more difficult than the renovation or regeneration of the soul. But it is a work better adapted to strike and astonish creatures like us, who are not only composed of matter as well as of spirit, but who are so much under the influence of the material part of their nature; it is a work which, like the other, is competent only to Omnipotence; for reason as well as revelation intimates that he only who gave life at first is able to restore it, and that it is the exclusive prerogative of God to "quicken the dead, and call the things which be not as though they were." Hence this work is mentioned as a proof that the Son is equal in power to the Father. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." But in this stupendous operation also the Spirit is the immediate and efficient agent. "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from

the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. viii. 11.)

Such, then, are the works and operations ascribed in Scripture to the Holy Spirit. They are numerous and diversified; they evidently presuppose the possession of divine perfections; and the argument which they furnish for his divinity is peculiarly powerful, scarcely less powerful than the parallel argument for the divinity of Christ founded in the works ascribed to him. It seems scarcely possible to conceive of any plausible objection that can be urged against this argument, unless it should be alleged that those works and operations were delegated to the Spirit as a subordinate agent. Even this objection, however, is manifestly futile; for some of the works that have been specified the Spirit is said expressly to perform "as he will," that is, of his own sovereign pleasure, and the same may therefore be presumed of them all. And in addition to this, the answer made to a similar objection to the argument founded in the works attributed to the Saviour, would be here equally applicable; namely, that admitting those works to be delegated to the Spirit by One sustaining in some respects a higher character or office, works which it requires omnipotence and other divine perfections to achieve, can be delegated only to a person who possesses omnipotence and all other divine perfections.

4. It now only remains to advert for a moment to the *honours* rendered to the Spirit. To prove that religious worship is given him it is not necessary to appeal to more than two passages of Scripture frequently appealed to in discussions on this question,—the form of baptism prescribed by the Saviour, and the apostolic benediction. "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name," or into the name, "of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." On these passages it would be superfluous to offer a lengthened commentary. No great perspicacity is requisite to see that they each furnish a decisive warrant for rendering divine honours to the Spirit; and no little ingenuity, or rather, no little disingenuity, would be requisite to impose on them an opposite construction. In the one the Spirit is

invoked as the author and dispenser of spiritual blessings; in the other he is acknowledged as the author of an important Christian institute, to whose service in this institute, Christians are solemnly consecrated; and in each of them he occupies the same elevated place as the Father and the Son.

Decisive as are these examples, they are not the only ones to which we may appeal. In Revelation i. 4, 5. we meet with the following remarkable invocation, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." The expression "seven spirits," or the "seven spirits of God," as they are elsewhere called, is certainly somewhat anomalous. But it cannot refer to created spirits, either human or angelical, for those seven spirits are mentioned between the Father and the Son, and invoked along with them for the most valuable spiritual blessings. To whom then can the expression refer but to the Holy Ghost himself? Nor will it appear unnatural that the Holy Ghost should be represented as "seven spirits," if we consider that the expression is used in allusion to the "seven churches," and the "seven golden candlesticks," and if we consider farther that among the Jews seven was the number denoting perfection, and consequently that the Holy Ghost may be represented as "seven spirits," to express the plenitude and perfection of his gifts and graces. Allowing then that it might have been illogical and unsafe to conclude, merely from this passage, that divine worship is due to the Spirit, it is both logical and safe to regard it as furnishing a subsidiary evidence of no small force.

On this particular I shall just add, that when it is asserted that to calumniate the Holy Ghost involves a guilt still more aggravated than to calumniate the Son of man, and when, farther, believers are represented as temples of which the Holy Ghost is the proprietor and the inhabitant, in each case it is assumed that he is a person entitled to the highest religious homage.

Having now stated fully the arguments for the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit, I shall take leave of the sub-

ject by adverting to the import of that appellation and to the relation in which the Spirit stands to the other persons of the Godhead. The Greek word $\piνεῦμα$, is rendered indiscriminately by the terms Ghost and Spirit; terms which have exactly the same meaning, the one being of Saxon and the other of Latin origin, and each in its primary acceptation denoting breath, wind, or air in motion. Such too seems to be the primary import of the Hebrew word rendered Spirit in the Old Testament. The term is next applied to the human soul, probably because it is supposed to bear some affinity or resemblance to air, as a subtle and invisible substance. As applied to the third person of the Godhead, the word Spirit could not be intended to intimate that he is more spiritual in his essence than the Father or the Son, for spirituality or immateriality is the property of each of the divine persons. What then is its exact import? and what are the reasons of its application? It is the general if not the universal opinion not only of ordinary Christians but of theological writers, who admit the doctrine of the Trinity, that the term is applied to Him partly if not principally on account of the relation in which he stands to the first and second persons of the Godhead; and that it implies that he proceeds from the Father if not also from the Son, in a manner somewhat analogous to that in which the breath of a man proceeds from his mouth. “As the vital breath of a man,” says Dr. Owen, “has a continual emanation from him, and yet is never separated utterly from his person, or forsaketh him; so doth *the Spirit of the Father and the Son* proceed from them by a *continual divine emanation*, still abiding one with them.” “To God,” says Dr. Barrow, “the name Spirit is attributed to signify his most simple nature, and his most powerful energy; but the other substances of this kind it seemeth also assigned to imply the manner of their origin, because God doth by a kind of spiration produce them, for which cause, likewise, at least in part, we may suppose that the Holy Scripture doth more signally and in a peculiar manner assign that name to one Being, that most excellent Being which is called the Spirit of God; (that is, of God the Father, which by reason of his priority of nature is often called God, in a personal signification.)”

Common as is the opinion expressed in those quotations, it may be doubted whether it is well founded, or at least, whether it has not been too hastily admitted. The term Spirit differs from the word Son in this, that in its etymological import, it is not expressive of a personal relation, that is, it does not convey the idea of relation to any other person or being. Still farther, to assert that either the Son or the Spirit derives his essence from the Father, is to assert a proposition, which to our faculties seems altogether irreconcilable with their absolute eternity and their self-existence, and consequently with their true and proper deity. On the whole, then, it seems not improbable that the name Spirit as applied to the third person of the Godhead, is not intended to refer to his relation either to the Father or the Son, but to express the spirituality of his essence, the mode of his communication, and the nature of his operations. While it may intimate that, like the other persons of the Trinity, he is an immaterial and intelligent agent, a pure spirit, it may intimate also that like the human breath, he is in the economy of the divine operations sent or breathed forth from the Father and the Son; and that like the wind, he moves and agitates material substances, quickens, refreshes, and invigorates the souls of men. And might it not be in allusion not to the mode of his existence, but to his mission and operations, that the Saviour breathed on his apostles, and said to them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost?"

The third person of the Godhead is often spoken of not simply as "the Spirit," but as "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of the Father," and "the Spirit of Christ;" expressions which many think are meant to refer to his personal or essential relations to the Father and the Son. That they are not intended to suggest any such idea it would be unwarrantable to affirm peremptorily; but the remarks already made render it at least probable that they refer merely to his office, describing him as the delegate or messenger of the other divine persons.

With regard to the epithet "Holy," which is so often applied to the Spirit, it can scarcely be necessary to observe that it cannot be intended to describe him as holy in contradistinction to the Father and the Son. Each of the divine persons is possessed of infinite purity; and in that

which is infinite there can be no degrees. While the epithet may remind us of what he is in himself, and may imply that he is pre-eminently holy as compared with the holiest even of celestial spirits, it must be applied to him chiefly on account of his office and work as the author of all the moral purity possessed by created spirits, and particularly as the grand and proximate agent in the renovation and sanctification of men.

It may be added, that while the Scripture reveals to us most distinctly the doctrine of the Trinity, of three persons in one Godhead, a doctrine which necessarily implies that these persons are connected by relations most intimate and inseparable, it is not to be regretted that it is so sparing in its information respecting those relations. The truth is, that the subject of the reciprocal relations of the persons of the Godhead is one far above the reach of our faculties; and except in so far as it seems necessary to a proper apprehension of the scheme of redemption, it may be regarded as a matter of speculation rather than of practical utility. Instead then of complaining of want of information, let us mark the divine wisdom in what is withheld as well as in what is communicated. Let us be thankful that not only are the existence and the divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit fully and explicitly declared to us, but that abundant information is also communicated with regard to the parts which they respectively sustain, and the operations which they perform in that stupendous scheme of grace, which it is the grand design of divine revelation to disclose. Let us then, without scruple or reserve, render divine homage to each of those divine persons; let us cherish for each of them the warmest sentiment of gratitude; and let us accept with promptitude and cordiality the inestimable blessings tendered to us as the result, whether of their combined or their separate operation.

This discussion may be appropriately concluded with the prayer with which Witsius commences his dissertation on the Holy Ghost, in his valuable work on the Creed. The prayer is ascribed to Cyprian; and is distinguished by the beauty and propriety of its sentiments, though the style is far too florid for the language of devotion. "Come, Holy Spirit, and descend from heaven upon us, who are looking up for thy benign influence. Sanctify the temple of our body, and consecrate it

for an habitation to thyself; gladden by thy presence the souls that are longing for thee. Prepare a suitable abode for thyself; adorn thy chamber and surround the place of thy rest with a sweet variety of virtues. Strew thy pavements with fair colours; let thy residence be beautified with sparkling carbuncles and splendid jewels; and let the perfumes of all thy graces diffuse their savour within. Avert from it whatever is corrupt, whatever tends to waste or to defile; render thus our joy stable and permanent; and let thy new creation be confirmed for ever in unfading beauty."

REMARKS ON THE
DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE DECREES.

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REMARKS ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE DECREES.

IN referring to the doctrine of the divine decrees, Dr. Wardlaw has expressed it as his opinion that the proper place for the discussion of it is not at the commencement, but at the conclusion of a system of divinity. It is somewhat remarkable that this is the arrangement adopted by Calvin; for in his "Institutes," one of the most valuable of human systems, he does not introduce the subject of predestination till after he has given a full account of the great scheme of redemption. And it is not less remarkable that in this, the example of Calvin has not been followed by almost any subsequent author, not excepting even those writers who have followed him most closely both in his general arrangement, and in his peculiar views and sentiments.

Like many other matters of arrangement, this under consideration is one only of subordinate importance. Without a gross violation of the principles of method, the subject may be introduced and discussed either towards the beginning, or towards the close of a theological system. If we introduce it towards the beginning, we adopt what seems the most natural, if not the most logical arrangement. We follow the order of time; and we follow what may be called also the order of nature; commencing with the purpose or plan, and proceeding to the words in which that purpose is embodied, and that plan evolved. On the other hand, to reserve this subject till towards the close, has doubtless its peculiar advantages, and can hardly be regarded as illogical or unnatural;

for after an account of the divine dispensations in providence and grace, it seems abundantly rational and natural to remark that all those dispensations have been predetermined; and then to consider the information suggested by reason, or delivered in Scripture, relative to the divine purposes and determinations.

This method is the more proper that our knowledge of the nature and properties of the divine decrees must be derived not so much from the direct information communicated respecting them, as from the actual development of them in the divine proceedings. As I do not intend to enter at great length into the subject, I do not think it requisite to deviate from the arrangement of our Shorter Catechism and our Confession of Faith; and shall therefore take the present opportunity of submitting to you such remarks as seem to me of greatest importance.

You must all be aware that, with the exception perhaps of the kindred question of liberty and necessity, there is scarcely any subject within the range either of theology or philosophy that has given occasion to more abstruse and difficult discussion. Judging from the success which has attended the efforts of those who have addressed themselves to the elucidation of it, it might seem presumptuous and chimerical to indulge the hope of placing it in a clear and satisfactory light. The most vigorous human intellects have been applied to it, and have attempted in vain to disentangle it from its difficulties; and perhaps it is only in accordance with truth that our great poet has represented it as attracting and perplexing the faculties even of angelic intelligences.

“Others apart sat on a hill retir’d
In thought more elevate, and reason’d high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
Fix’d fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wand’ring mazes lost.”

To entangle ourselves in the mazes of such a subject would not be conducive to “the use of edifying.” I have no such intention; and my principal object will therefore be, not to state at length the common arguments for the Calvinistic doctrines of predestination and election, but to make a few strictures

on some of these arguments, and to specify certain modifications with which I am disposed to receive those doctrines, at least as taught by Calvin himself, more particularly those which relate to the decree of sinful actions or moral evil. The observations which I have to make will perhaps be somewhat desultory; but I trust that they will be perfectly intelligible, and not altogether unimportant.

When employed in reference to men, the terms counsels, purposes, plans, and decrees convey different shades of meaning; but they imply substantially, if not identically, the same thing when employed in reference to God. If God be the governor of the universe, all creatures, all objects, and all events must be under his control. If he is possessed of infinite perfection, and, more especially, if he is eternal, omniscient, and unerring, he must act according to a plan; that plan must have been formed from eternity, and it must comprehend whatever exists, and whatever occurs in time. Hence it is common to speak of all things whatever as decreed or ordained by God. "The decrees of God," says our Shorter Catechism, "are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." Strong and unrestricted as is this language, it seems evidently to be countenanced by the language of inspiration. "Of him, and through him, and to him are all things." (Rom. xi. 36.)

While no intelligent theist can reasonably doubt that the plans and decrees of God extend in some form to all things without exception, and while in some sense it may be said that he has predetermined or foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, a little consideration may convince us that he has not ordained all things in exactly the same sense, and it may serve to throw some light on this dark subject, to point out the difference in the mode in which different objects may be said to be ordained or decreed. It may be remarked then, that a decree seems necessary to presuppose an emotion of complacency in the thing decreed, a wish that it take place as in some account desirable; and that, in the strict and most proper sense of the term, an agent can be said to decree or purpose only those things which are to be done by himself, not the things which are done by another. In this strict or

absolute sense the Almighty may be said to have ordained and decreed all the changes and all the phenomena which take place in the material universe ; for of all of them his agency is the proper cause ; they are all produced either immediately or remotely by his operation. In this strict and proper sense it may be asserted also that he has ordained the salvation, or rather what he himself does in effecting the salvation, of some of the human race ; that he hath ordained the punishment which he will inflict on the disobedient and the unbelieving ; for by the very terms of the proposition the things specified are the result of his own energy. This department of the divine decrees seems to be attended with no difficulty whatever. Men who are ignorant, and feeble, and dependent creatures, can form plans and intentions respecting their future conduct : how much more must that be possible to him who is omniscient and omnipotent, independent and infinite.

A second class of objects or events generally specified as comprehended in the divine decree, consists of the good actions of men ; those actions which are produced through the invigorating influence of the Holy Spirit, and which are implied in the repentance, the faith, and the new obedience of believers. These good actions are evidently not decreed or ordained in exactly the same sense as the actions of God himself. Not that the result is less certain, or that it is not anticipated with complacency and desire ; but that being of a mixed and compound nature, the effect partly of divine and partly of human agency, it seems obviously improper to assert that God appoints or decrees it in the same way in which he decrees his own acts, or in which he decrees effects flowing solely from his own acts. With regard, however, to the pious purposes and holy actions of the saints, there seems to be no particular difficulty in conceiving how they should be the objects of a divine determination or appointment. Limited as are the knowledge and the power of men, there are yet innumerable instances in which they plan or purpose results dependent in part on the volitions and actions of their fellow-creatures, and they plan or purpose those results with unlimited confidence, as matters almost of absolute certainty. Surely then it need not be thought incredible, that He who is the maker and ruler of the universe, and who has “ the hearts

of all men in his hand," may be able to plan such results with infallible certainty, and without infringing on the free agency and moral responsibility of his creatures.

We come now to a third class of actions usually regarded as being also embraced in the divine decree; and with regard to which the doctrine of the divine decrees is beset with great if not with inextricable perplexities. I need hardly say that I refer to the sinful actions of men and of other intelligent and accountable agents. Into this branch of the subject it will be proper to enter somewhat more fully.

It was the doctrine of Calvin, and of some of the most eminent divines at the era of the Reformation, that those actions are decreed or appointed by God in the same sense as his own actions, or as those good works performed by men under the quickening energy of the divine Spirit. Some of those divines make little or no distinction between the manner in which good and that in which sinful actions are predetermined, and hence they have been seduced into the adoption of language most paradoxical and alarming, if not profane and shocking. It may not be agreeable, but it will not be un instructive or unprofitable, to produce some specimens of that objectionable language. "God," says Calvin, "not only foresaw but disposed the fall and ruin of man." "The wicked perish not by God's permission only, but by his will and appointment." "The decree of God is the ground of the untoward disposition of the wicked to the means of grace." And again he says—"It is not consistent to transfer the preparation for destruction to any other than the secret counsel of God." "The cause of men's hearts being hardened is the secret counsel of God." "Necessity of sinning excuseth not the sinner." Such is the language of Calvin. Scarcely less strong is that of Luther. "God does not will such and such things," says the German reformer, "because they are in themselves right, and he is bound to will them; but they are equitable, or right, because he wills them." "This mightily offends our rational nature that God should of his own mere unbiased will first harden men and then condemn them." "God has no motive for what he wills," says Bucer, "but his will itself, *ipsa voluntas*." Soon after the publication of Howe's admirable treatise on the "Reconcilableness of God's Preseience of the

sins of men with the wisdom and sincerity of his counsels, exhortations, and whatever means he uses to prevent them," there appeared some strictures upon it by Gale, in a learned and elaborate work entitled the "Court of the Gentiles." One of the principal positions which seems to have been asserted by Gale in opposition to Howe, and asserted as the doctrine of the most orthodox divines is this—"That God concurs by a determinative influence to all the actions of his creatures, even the most wicked." And from Howe's judicious and temperate reply it would appear that because he refused to admit this position he was accused of denying the doctrine of God's universal providence.

Such is a sample of the phraseology employed by some of the most illustrious of the Reformers, and by many of their immediate successors. Let us next take an example or two from some more recent authors. "God intended sin," says Toplady, "that he might magnify his glory, and spiritual men see no absurdity in all this." In one sense this statement may be perfectly correct; but what he adds, if true, is certainly not very intelligible. "God," he says, "is the author of sinful actions as actions, but not as sinful actions. Sin is a privation or negative effect, and therefore can have no positive or efficient cause." "The decree of God," says the pious Mr. Boston, "is not the cause of the fall of man; and yet the fall of man would not have taken place if God had not decreed it."

To the preceding quotations, others perhaps still more apposite might be added without much difficulty; those are adduced simply as a specimen; and for this purpose they seem amply sufficient. In offering a few remarks on them, I would begin by observing, what candour requires to be carefully borne in mind, that in the works of most of the authors referred to, statements of an opposite complexion frequently occur, statements tending to modify considerably, if not wholly to neutralize, those obnoxious declarations. I remark next, that while some of those declarations may be somewhat ambiguous, and may perhaps admit of a meaning perfectly unexceptionable, there are others which, taken according to their natural and obvious import, necessarily involve the idea that God himself is the author of sin. Not

only is he represented as decreeing sinful actions, but as willing or desiring them, and as exerting a positive influence in producing them. What less is implied in the assertions of Calvin that "the decree of God is the ground of the untoward disposition of the wicked to the means of grace;" and that "the cause of men's hearts being hardened is the secret counsel of God."

How far such language is sanctioned or countenanced by Scripture I shall afterwards inquire. In the meantime I must remark that, however profound may be the veneration justly due to the memory of such men as Luther and Calvin, and however great may be the tenderness or indulgence with which their mistakes ought to be treated, yet to shrink from censuring such language as that just quoted,—far from indicating sentiments of enlightened gratitude and respect,—would evince a spirit of tame and cowardly deference to human authority. To represent God as in any respect the author of sin, or as contemplating it with any thing like satisfaction or complacency, is to subvert completely the foundations of religion; to render it impossible to regard him with sentiments either of veneration or love. "Far be it from God that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity." Such are his own declarations; and "let God be true, but every man a liar." If then we are resolutely determined to "ascribe righteousness to our Maker," and if we are thoroughly persuaded that "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man," we will surely shrink with horror from the assertions that "the decree of God is the ground of the untoward disposition of the wicked to the means of grace;" that "God of his own mere unbiassed will, first hardens men, and then condemns them;" and that "he concurs by a determinative influence even to the wicked actions of his creatures." If, from an idolatrous respect for names or parties, we scruple to reprobate those expressions, we have not imbibed the spirit of the noble maxim of the heathen poet:

"Nullius addictus jurari in verba magistri."

A maxim, it may be added, still more emphatically inculcated in the language of inspiration : " Call no man master on earth, or father ; for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called master ; for one is your Master (or teacher), even Christ."

To return from these practical remarks to the subject of more immediate discussion, I may observe that in the works of subsequent writers there is a gradual but most perceptible shrinking or recession from the dogmatic and unwarrantable language of Luther and Calvin, and others of the reformers, on the subject of the divine decrees ; and that it is interesting as well as instructive to trace that recession. With the exception, indeed, of Vaughan, of Leicester, and a few others who have embraced the principles of Antinomianism, no recent author of any repute, at least as far as I am aware, has ventured to maintain the positions of Luther and Calvin without considerable modifications, or to affirm in express terms that God exerts any direct or positive influence in the production of the sinful actions of men. The doctrine which is now generally received among divines of the Calvinistic school is to this purport ; that while sinful as well as good actions are decreed or foreordained of God, they are not decreed in the same sense ; the latter being the objects of an effective, the former only of a permissive decree. Such is the form in which the doctrine is stated by Mr. Brown of Haddington, in his *System of Divinity*, by Dr. Dick in his *Lectures*, and by almost all the recent expounders and defenders of Calvinism. This view of the subject seems to me substantially correct ; but as the language employed to represent it is not perhaps altogether unexceptionable, it may be proper to offer a remark or two on the phrase, *permissive decree*. What, I would ask, what precisely is meant by such a decree ? The expression, according to its proper import, would seem to refer to an event which the author of the decree foresees will happen, which he could prevent if he pleased, but which he resolves to permit. But if so, the permissive decree of an event does not differ essentially from the foreknowledge of it ; or rather, with the foreknowledge of it, it conjoins an additional element, namely, the determination to allow it. If there be something more than this

in a permissive decree, no advocate of the theory, as far as I know, has ever given an intelligible description of what that something is. Assuming, then, the definition now given to be correct, a permissive decree, in strictness of language, is not a decree at all; for the decree ordains not the event which is to take place, but something quite distinct from it, namely, the conduct which a spectator and agent foreseeing it, determines to pursue; and its essence consists not in a resolution to produce the event, a resolution obviously superfluous, but in a resolution not to interfere to prevent it; and consequently it is a resolution not to act but to abstain from acting.

Perhaps it is proper to mention that the divine decree relative to sinful actions is regarded by many theologians as at once permissive and efficacious. "It is permissive," it has been said, "with respect to the *sinfulness* of the action as a moral evil; and efficacious, with respect to the *matter* of it as a natural act." This distinction, if not utterly incomprehensible, is at least not very intelligible; and is any thing but satisfactory. It may have a semblance of plausibility, or a foundation in truth, in reference to external and corporeal actions; but it is altogether inapplicable to the interior and invisible acts of the soul; and properly speaking, it is of the latter, not of the former, that moral good and evil are the attributes. The will, or the deliberate purpose to perpetrate a deed of wickedness is itself a sinful act; an act out of which it is as impossible to separate the idea of criminality as to conceive of matter apart from extension. It is therefore utterly inconceivable how such an act could be efficaciously ordained or decreed without the ordination of its criminality; and hence it follows either that God exerts an efficacious influence in the production of sin, or that the decree relative to sinful actions is not efficacious, but merely permissive, that is, as has already been shown, it is not a decree in the strict and proper sense of the term.

It may be allowed, however, that the determination to permit a sinful action may, in a lax and popular sense of the term, be called a decree. It is a decree, not as implying any complacency in the sinful action, or any causal influence in producing it, but as implying an act of the divine mind willing it, at least in one sense of the term. The existence

of such an act flows necessarily from the fact that he who foresees the action could prevent it if he pleased; as he cannot be indifferent to it, he may be regarded as willing it,—willing it, however, not for its own sake, but for its accompaniments or results.

It can hardly be necessary to add that as the divine decree relative to sinful actions comprehends a determination to permit them, it must of course comprehend a determination to uphold the agent in the possession of all those natural powers and faculties without which such actions could not be performed. It may be regarded as comprehending further a determination to control him in the exercise of his powers, to restrain his sinful volitions and actions within certain limits; and a purpose to overrule even the most criminal of his actions, and to render them subservient to wise and holy and beneficent ends.

Such seem to me the principal ideas implied in the divine purpose respecting sinful actions; and such consequently is the only sense in which, I apprehend, it can be asserted with propriety that sinful actions are decreed by God. I am not aware that this sense has been accurately and satisfactorily pointed out by any writer; but as was formerly noticed, later authors of the Calvinistic school are visibly dissatisfied with the strong and unguarded phrasology of their predecessors. In proof of this, I quote the following sentences from Professor Stuart. “It seems to me,” says he, “that I perceive in nearly all who are sober-minded and judicious men, a radical mistake in their conceptions respecting *predestination*. They transfer to the analogies of the *material* world; and then they seem to feel, that it is but another name for *fate* or *destiny*. They conceive of a *decretum absolutum* as involved in it, which, as they view it, is neither more nor less than a decree *without any reason*, a mere *arbitrary decision*. With such views, they reject the doctrine of predestination; and rightly, for it does indeed involve all this.”* While Mr. Stuart, in commenting on Romans viii. and ix., has made several valuable observations, both critical and theological, on the subject of predestination, it is yet

* Stuart on Romans, page 379.

singular that he has not stated, at least in a precise and satisfactory manner, what is his own idea of a divine decree. But it can hardly be doubted that he has run into an extreme the opposite of that which he condemns, identifying substantially the decree or purpose of God with mere foreknowledge. "God," says he, "must have always perfectly known every thing that will take place. If he knew it with *certainty*, (and if he did not, then he did not know it at all;) then is it *uncertain* whether it will take place? And if it is *certain*, then how does this differ from what is said to be *decreed*? The name *decree*," he adds, "seems to have carried along with it a kind of terror to many minds; but, as far as I can see, it implies neither more nor less than *divine purpose* or *divine will*." Had Mr. Stuart forgotten that he had just represented decree as identical with certain foreknowledge; and was he not aware that there may be the knowledge of an object where there is no purpose or will respecting it?



ON THE GLORY OF GOD,
AS THE GREAT END OF MORAL ACTION.

BY JOHN MARTIN, D.D.,

LATE MINISTER OF KIRKCALDY.



PREFATORY NOTICE.

JOHN MARTIN was born at Balmaghie in the stewartry of Kirkcudbright, on the 16th of November, 1769. His father, the Rev. Samuel Martin, at that time minister of that parish, was in 1775 translated to Monimail in Fifeshire, where he laboured for more than half a century, a pattern of simple piety and ministerial faithfulness. Mr. Martin received his tuition at home under the superintendence of his father till the period of his entering college. In the year 1782 he was enrolled as a student in the university of St. Andrews. After an attendance of four years there, he commenced the study of divinity in the university of Edinburgh. Having finished his university curriculum with honour, and passed with entire satisfaction through the usual system of examinations, he was licensed to preach by the presbytery of Cupar-Fife, on October 16th, 1792, and a few months afterwards was ordained minister of Strathmiglo in the same county. After fourteen years of devoted pastoral labour there, Mr. Martin, in consequence of the removal of Dr. Fleming to Edinburgh, was removed to a wider sphere of usefulness in the pastoral charge of the parish of Kirkcaldy, where he laboured with indefatigable assiduity during the remainder of his life. The degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred on him by the university of St. Andrews, in consequence of a unanimous request from his co-presbyters. Dr. Martin took an active part in promoting the Bible and Missionary cause, and with a liberality not at that time common in the Established church, opened his pulpit for pleading their claims to ministers of whatever denomination, of whose religious character he had assurance. Dr. Martin had his full share of “the chastisement of which all the children are partakers”—and bore it with exemplary meekness and fortitude. As a theologian and preacher Dr. Martin occupied a high place. He had few equals,

fewer superiors in his own or in any church. His death, which was occasioned by his being thrown from a carriage, took place on the 1st of September, 1837, and occasioned the deepest regret throughout the wide sphere of his connexions. In the year after his death a volume of his "Remains, consisting of Sermons, Essays, and Letters," was given to the world—to which was prefixed a well-written memoir, to which we are chiefly indebted for the information contained in this notice. This volume, though posthumous, is one of the most valuable contributions which Scotland has received in theology in our times, and its author takes his place along with Binning, Haliburton, Maclaurin, Wither-
spoon, and Erskine. It is understood that there remain unpublished a number of compositions not inferior to those contained in the "Remains." It will be a subject of just regret if they should be lost to the world. By the kindness of the family I have been enabled to enrich this collection of tracts with the following dissertation "On the glory of God as the great end of moral action," which was written for and read before a society of ministers, for whom also the essays contained in the "Remains" were originally designed. The whole of these essays, and especially that entitled "Observations on the nature of Faith," are worthy of attentive perusal by all, especially by ministers and students of theology.

ON THE GLORY OF GOD, AS THE GREAT END OF MORAL ACTION.

ON a regard to the glory of God, as the best and most powerful motive to pastoral fidelity and diligence, I have reason to believe that a very useful and impressive essay was read to this meeting before I had the happiness to be a member of it. The light in which I now propose to consider this sacred theme is more general: but at the same time, may, I hope, be found not without its use, both in relation to our own moral improvement, and to the important duties of our peculiar station. What I propose is an attempt to ascertain in what particular view, the glory of God is, and ought to be considered, when it is proposed as the end or motive of moral action.

When anything is considered in an aspect so important and serious as this, it must be of great consequence that we should have a clear and definite view of what is meant, and of the manner in which we ought to be affected by it; otherwise it can have no precise or useful influence over us, can lead to no certain or permanent results. Now, though the bulk of professing Christians have learned to speak of the glory of God, as that which ought to be the chief end of their actions, yet I am afraid it is rather by rote than reason, and that few of them have any distinct idea of what is meant by the glory of God, when the term is so used, or of the manner in which his glory may be either hindered or promoted by their actions. Nay, from the manner in which we sometimes hear the glory of God mentioned in this view, even by Christian instructors,

one might be tempted to think that they had never formed any clear or consistent notions concerning it. They appear to resort to it as a known and approved common-place, capable of very general application, and which may conveniently supply the place of something more appropriate, but perhaps not so easily come at. Yet while it has afforded some well sounding sentences, and presented to the minds of the hearers an object to which all bow as sacred, the speakers themselves seemed not to understand clearly whereof they affirmed, or to discern the relation which it bore to the subject with which they connected it; at least from their statement, no distinct perception of that relation could be formed. This is attended with two evils. While the statement is thus indistinct, and the relation is thus left obscure or imperceptible, no useful impression can be made, and no sense of obligation excited, by even so momentous a consideration. And from this again, there is reason to dread that professors, being accustomed in such instances, to hear the glory of God spoken of in a manner that prevents their perceiving their obligation to pursue it, may be ready equally to overlook that obligation in other cases, and to regard the mention of that glory as only words of course, as a kind of theological slang, serving to fill up the time, or round a sentence, but not meriting much attention in hearing, or entitled to much deference in practice. And to this, perhaps, may, in part, be traced that apathy and indifference with which many can hear this most solemn and important consideration urged. It has appeared to me, therefore, that it would be of use to myself, at least, and to those whose spiritual welfare is likely to be, in any measure, affected by my instructions, to endeavour to bring the vague and general ideas, with which many appear satisfied on this topic, to something definite and precise.

If we attend, indeed, to what is, in the strict and proper sense of the words, "the glory of God," we must acknowledge that it is something which is altogether independent of us, and which therefore cannot be proposed as the end of our actions; for that, which we can neither hinder nor advance, it were evidently absurd to speak of as an end or motive to our actions. But nothing can be more certain than that this is the case, with respect to the glory of God, strictly and ab-

solutely considered. For what is that glory? and whence does it arise? It results from the exercise, and consists in the display of the excellences of his own nature. But that exercise and display, no creature, nor all creatures combined, can either prevent or promote. They cannot restrain the exertion of his perfections. They cannot render them more or less excellent than they are. Though all inferior intelligences should be so blinded as not to perceive their exercise, so perverse as not to admire their display, his glory would remain in itself the same, its intrinsic excellence undiminished, its real lustre unimpaired. It would still remain the proper object of delightful contemplation to himself; as it is, indeed, the only object capable of affording him full exercise to his powers whether of contemplation or of pleasure, the only object fully worthy of them. The brightness of the sun is not tarnished though he that is blind cannot, and though those that obstinately shut their eyes will not, behold it. Hence some persons, whose minds have got just so far beyond the range of ideas possessed by the common mass of mankind, as to perceive this distinctly, think themselves entitled to sneer at every one who asserts that the glory of God ought to be the chief end of human action, as an ignorant and pitiful enthusiast. But they forget that, though, for the reason just stated, the divine glory, in the strictest and highest sense, is, without doubt, wholly independent of the intentions or actions of creatures; yet if the Deity has been pleased to enter into certain particular relations to them, it is nothing inconsistent with what has been said of his glory absolutely considered, to affirm that in these particular relations, it may be promoted or impaired. His glory, as the Father of those who have received the Spirit of adoption, is advanced by the dutifulness, is hindered by the disobedience of his children. His glory, as a Saviour, is necessarily connected with the salvation of his people. Whatever obstructs their salvation obstructs, in that respect, his glory. And could their salvation be altogether prevented, his glory as their Saviour would become an impossibility. Some, too, whose knowledge and abilities certainly far exceed those of the sciolists just alluded to, have loudly objected to the doctrine which affirms the glory of God to be the object which he requires us to propose

in all our actions, and the great end which he pursues in his own, that it represents him as a vain-glorious being, childishly eager for adulation and applause, and influenced in his conduct to his creatures, by a passion which we universally condemn in one another as ignoble, as unworthy of an enlarged and virtuous mind. "Beware," says Voltaire, in a speech which, with affected zeal for the true honour of the Deity, he puts into the mouth of a sage, who is held up as a paragon of wisdom and virtue ;—"Beware of describing the Almighty as a being that is greedy of praise, and jealous of his honour ; as if, like earthly despots, he dreaded a rival ; or felt the wretched want of applause, to which vanity makes weak mortals subject." The object at which this covert sarcasm points, is but too palpable ; and the saying has such a semblance of truth and reason, that minds, which have not thought accurately, and felt seriously upon the subject, may be apt to receive from it a deep and dangerous prejudice against the doctrine now in view. And sometimes, I must acknowledge, I have been hurt at the manner in which persons, who no doubt mean well, speak of the sovereignty of God, and of his concern for his own glory. They talk, as if he exercised his sovereignty only in disappointing the expectations, and thwarting the designs of his creatures, however fit or reasonable ; as if he vindicated and displayed his glory chiefly by purposely acting in a manner mysterious and incomprehensible, contrary to all the wishes, hopes, and conclusions, which the best and most enlightened minds may have formed.

Such language no doubt asserts both the existence and the exercise of divine sovereignty : but it gives the idea of the sovereignty, not of pure wisdom and beneficent goodness, but of that of caprice, and cruelty, of the unworthy wilfulness, which alike refuses to be guided by any reason in its actings, and to assign any reason for them. Those who use such language, speak as if God inflicted disappointment, merely to display his power ; as if it were one of the chief objects of his government, merely to perplex and confound his creatures. But such persons preposterously form their rule from the exceptions, instead of the general case. They forget that, if the wishes of creatures were truly good, and their conclusions

wise and just, it would be the glory of God, not to frustrate, but to fulfil them: that in the great majority of cases, the expectations of rational and dutiful minds are realised: that if in any instance it is not so, this is only because there is some important reason for it, which they have not access to know, or which perhaps, though it were laid before them, they could not comprehend; yet which, did they know and understand it, would command their unqualified assent. The crude ideas, and unguarded language of such persons, give too much countenance to those distorted representations of scriptural doctrine, to which we have alluded. There is the more cause, then, that we should endeavour to rescue that doctrine from the misrepresentations alike of those who wittingly and of those who unwittingly mistake and misstate it: the more obligation, to show not only that it is a doctrine according to reason, but that of all the doctrines which have been proposed on the subject of our present inquiry, it is the most reasonable.

If we attend, then, merely to the general question, What is the end that God's rational creatures should chiefly follow in their actions? that, I apprehend, will be best answered, if we can ascertain what is the chief end for which he has created and governs the world. For it will be conceded by every one, who acknowledges the perfect moral wisdom of Jehovah, that whatever he has been pleased to make his end, in the formation and preservation of all things, ought to be the end proposed and kept in view, by reasonable beings, in every particular case in which they are concerned. Now if there be any criterion by which we may ascertain what is his chief end in creating and maintaining all things, it seems to me to be found in this, What is the end which all things, beings, and events, of whatever description or character, shall certainly and infallibly promote? We can easily conceive, and we know it to be true in fact, that there is a great variety of particular ends, which the same objects may promote: and of these we can easily perceive some to be more important, some to be more subordinate; nay some to be incompatible with others, and to change in their incompatibilities with changing circumstances. But it can be no imputation on the perfection of power and wisdom in the Maker and Ruler of the

world, that inferior should give way to superior ends, that incompatibilities should not exist together ; in short, that every subordinate end for which any being has been formed, should fail in its turn, if weightier considerations so require. But it were a direct denial either of his wisdom in arranging the schemes of his Providence, or of his power in carrying them into effect, to suppose that the one great and final end, which all things were intended to promote, should, in any instance, be defeated.

What, then, is the end, which all things must, and do infallibly promote? It has been said, and it may by some be supposed to be the good of sentient and intelligent beings. But that this is not the case with respect to many individuals, or even with respect to numerous and important classes of the creatures of God, every hour's experience irrefragably proves : for, in instances exceeding all computation, we find that end, in so far as regards those classes and individuals, not only defeated, but reversed. If again it shall be said that the chief end of the creation and government of the universe, is the greatest good of the whole, though not the particular good of particular classes or individuals of creatures, this perhaps may be the case ; at least it is less easy to be disproved. But with respect to this, it may for one thing, be affirmed that it is the same, or nearly the same, with the glory of God : for let it be assumed that his glory is the chief end of creation ; then in what must that glory consist, by what shall it appear? By what, but the excellence of the grand results of all his works and dispensations, in other words, the greatest possible degree of good. Yet that the happiness of the creature, simply considered, is not that end, the lamentable facts which we hourly see, and which have been already noticed, prove. Nay, did we attend merely to the inference which the analogy of these facts would lead us to form, we might be apt to question whether even the supposed greatest good of creation in general, be at all comprehended in the chief end, for which all things are made. In every other case, we reason from particulars to generals. And if, in this case, we must admit that, throughout so vast a variety of particular instances, the good of the creature is not the final end of the Almighty's operations, it may seem

that we have cause at least to doubt whether it be his chief object in the whole.

But for another thing, though it should be conceded or proved that the greatest good of the universe on the whole is the chief object of its Creator and Governor, it must be granted that this is an end, of the relation between which and his particular operations, we are altogether unqualified to judge, or even to attain a perception. We can see, in specific instances, the tendency of causes and events, to consequences good or evil. But the good of the whole, and the relation of all particular circumstances and acts to that, form a theme too vast for human, probably too vast for finite comprehension. It is, therefore, an end, to which it were evidently vain to pretend that we can adapt our own actions. For how the universal good can be affected or unaffected, promoted or obstructed, by the volitions and pursuits of parts so minute as we are, who among us will presume to decide? But unless we can clearly see how our actions will influence the attainment of this object, it were absurd to require that we should propose it as our end, and that our conduct should be regulated by a supreme regard to it. It appears, then, that the happiness of creatures, simply considered, is most assuredly not the chief end for which God has made and governs all things; and that it is not even the greatest good of the whole, in any manner which we are capable of apprehending, or to which we can pretend to adapt our actions. But if we apply the test which has been already specified,—if we inquire what is the end which creatures and events, of whatever description, shall certainly promote, it is palpably and evidently, the glory of God. We can, at least, easily conceive, if not clearly discern, the relation between that end, and every particular fact that occurs under the divine administration. For if the glory of God result from the exercise, and consist in the display of the perfections of his nature, we can easily conceive how every being and every event may afford occasion for the exercise and display of one or other of these: and if he superintend and direct all things, we must be convinced that this takes place in even the minutest incident; in short, that this end must and shall be attained, whatever be the actions, or conditions

of his creatures. For not to dwell on the obvious fact, that the existence and preservation of the universe afford continual exercise to what are called the natural attributes of God, and present us with a continual display of them, let us remark what is more immediately interesting to us as moral and intelligent agents, that there is occasion, in every event, for the exercise of his moral perfections too, and that these shall be displayed and glorified, whatever be the character and conduct, by which we, or other accountable creatures, may be distinguished. Are they innocent? His justice and holiness shall be exhibited in their protection from evil, and in the divine complacency of which they shall be the objects. Are they eminently and actively virtuous? These attributes shall be glorified in the greatness of their reward. In fine, do they continue in a fit moral state for receiving and enjoying the effects of his goodness? That goodness shall be displayed in pouring out upon them the abundance of its riches. Are they impure? His holiness shall be manifested in the detestation with which they are regarded. Are they actually guilty? His rectitude shall appear in the exact severity of their punishment. While thanks be to his name, we can add that he may take occasion, even from their guilt, to glorify his merey in pardoning and sparing them: and then to magnify his love, in crowning them with everlasting joy and honour; occasion also, to exhibit more illustriously the natural attribute of wisdom, in rendering the exercise of mercy consistent with that of holiness and righteousness; the natural attribute of power, in accomplishing all the purposes essential to their salvation. Indeed, to afford occasion for the exercise, and opportunity for the display of the perfections of God, is an end, which all beings serve, whether rational or irrational, animate or inanimate. Between rational agents and all other beings, however, there is this important difference, that, while the former, like others, must and do promote God's glory, they are capable of discerning and judging of that end, capable of proposing it to themselves as the object for which they act.

But it may be objected, have we not admitted and asserted that that end is altogether independent of us? Nay, does not the illustration, which has just been exhibited, prove that

God shall be glorified, let us will and act how we may? And it may be asked, does it not then follow that, if we are to act *merely* from a regard to his glory, we may as well do wickedly, to give occasion for the display of his justice, in our punishment, as believe and repent and obey with a view to that of his mercy in our salvation? And most true, the glory of God, absolutely considered, is wholly independent of us. Its certainty and unchangeableness is secured by the unchangeableness of his nature. But if, from the unchangeable characteristics of that nature, he choose to be glorified in one way rather than in another, in one attribute of his nature rather than another, it is the privilege of rational beings to discern this, and their duty to act for the attainment of it. If, then, as the declarations of Scripture and the dispensations of Providence unite to prove, he desires to be glorified rather in the holiness and happiness of moral agents in general, in the repentance and salvation of mankind in particular, than in their sin and misery,—rather in his exuberant goodness and saving mercy, than in his avenging justice, it is our duty, as it is our interest, habitually to keep in view this great and beneficent end, to co-operate with God, and to be subservient to him with our every power and faculty, in endeavouring to promote it in ourselves and others.

Here then is one distinct and intelligible view, in which the glory of God may be furthered or obstructed by men or other intellectual agents: a view, therefore, in which the prosecution of his glory may be urged as a sacred duty. Whatever tends to render moral agents morally impure and therefore obnoxious to misery, tends to hinder (not indeed the glory of God in general, but) the glory of his goodness and his love in preserving and prolonging their felicity. Whatever serves to prevent the faith, and repentance, and improvement of human sinners, prevents, in the same proportion, the glory of his grace in their redemption. And, on the contrary, whatever confirms and heightens the excellence of moral agents in general, the faith and renovation of human agents in particular, tends to further the glory, that is, to afford occasion to the display of that goodness and that grace.

Were this, however, the only view in which the glory of

God is to be considered as the end of his actions, and the proper end of ours, it might be demanded what advantage do we obtain by speaking of this glory as a distinct end of moral conduct, nay as something more excellent and obligatory than any regard to creatures? Why not propose at once the virtue and the happiness of the creature, as the end for which we ought to act? We may answer, that even in this view, it will be advantageous to make the glory of God our supreme end; because as the attributes and excellences of his nature are always the same, their proper glory must be so too. To act, then, from a regard to it may be expected to secure a steadiness and consistency of practice, which no other principle can so well support: to preserve us from those mistakes and errors, to which narrow and temporary views would make us liable, did we look only to what might appear conducive, in particular circumstances, even to the moral improvement of creatures; and still more, did we attend merely to what might seem subservient to their happiness. To all which it may be added, that the awful majesty of the divine attributes, if suitably contemplated, must command a reverence, and secure, over our minds and conduct, an influence which no meaner objects can maintain.

But there is still another, a nobler and more enlarged view, in which the glory of God is to be regarded as the end of moral action. Beings endowed with reason, and capable of moral action, are capable of discerning, and, in a degree corresponding to the vigour and purity of their powers, of appreciating the excellences of the divine character. But no being possessed of a rational and moral nature, unless its principles be utterly perverted, will deny that, in precise proportion to the moral excellence of any agent or quality, that quality or agent ought to be esteemed; and not only esteemed, but honoured; that is, in other words, the esteem which it excites should be suitably expressed; for honour paid is just the expression of esteem. The moral excellences of the divine nature, then, being infinitely and absolutely perfect, are entitled to perfect and unlimited esteem. So to act, therefore, as to exhibit this esteem is the duty of all God's reasonable offspring. And their obligation in this respect, is heightened to the greatest possible degree, when we

reflect that the connection of his moral attributes with his natural perfections, renders the former of infinite importance to his creatures. He is not only a being of perfect holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, and as such, entitled in the abstract, independently of any particular effects of these attributes, in relation to us, to the highest esteem and honour; but a being of perfect holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, united with, and supported by omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. And the latter qualities render the former infinitely important and interesting to all his rational creatures, because they insure the efficacious exertion of them, in the administration of every part of his government, and convince us that, on the being in whom they are found, we and the whole intellectual universe depend.

This unlimited esteem, of which the divine perfections are the proper objects, and the suitable expression of it in our conduct, will be found to imply the imitation of these exalted qualities, and a cheerful compliance with whatever we discern to be the will of God. For the very sentiment of esteem naturally prompts to the imitation of that which has excited it. We would be what we admire. We would share in the honour which we find ourselves constrained to pay to it. We feel that it ought to be copied in our hearts and lives. Imitation is, indeed, the just and natural test of the strength and sincerity of esteem. And what we term God's will, considered as a rule of action, is the expression of his perfections united in taking counsel, and in forming determinations worthy of each, and of all of them. Whoever, therefore, has a suitable esteem for the perfections, will regard with the profoundest reverence the will of God, in which they all address him.

On what, then, do we insist, when we insist on a supreme regard to the glory of God? On nothing but what is unquestionably most reasonable, that the highest excellence should have the highest esteem, and that this esteem should be exhibited by corresponding expressions. Indeed, it is evident that, wherever there exists the esteem which we owe to the divine perfections, these expressions will appear. I say the esteem *which we owe*, not the esteem which is *adequate* to these perfections. For, to esteem them adequately, we must

comprehend them fully; and this what finite being can? The esteem which we owe, then, is the highest which we are capable of forming. For if, even after our most exalted efforts, we still come short, he, who does not his utmost, palpably fails in his duty. We do not justice, therefore, to the divine perfections, but when we regard them with the highest esteem that we can possibly conceive, our esteem far transcending that which we pay to any other object. Now that, surely, which is the object of a sentiment so powerful, that which holds in our minds a station so exalted, must exercise over us the mightiest influence. In this view, a regard to the glory of God consists in a *due*, that is, the *highest possible* esteem of his excellences; and to glorify him is to exhibit this esteem.

Farther, thus to exhibit our regard to the divine excellences, is not only the natural and obligatory result of a due estimation of them, but is of much importance that others may be taught and excited to think and to do likewise. We all know how readily an unseen being may be forgotten. Perhaps, it may be for the advantage of even the purest intelligent creatures to be from time to time reminded of what they owe to the glory of God. But there seem to be few means more likely to promote this end, than the exemplification of that sentiment in the character and conduct of others. Reasonable agents will more easily perceive, and more strongly feel their own obligations, when they see them felt and acted on by their fellows. And if this influence may be useful to even sinless beings, how important must it be in the case of those, in whose minds there is a principle prone to withdraw from God, and to say to him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

It appears, then, that the doctrine of Christianity respecting the glory of God, resolves itself into this most just and reasonable principle, That the highest excellence should be regarded with the highest esteem; and that to this most just and reasonable sentiment our actions should correspond.—Nor will a mere regard to moral excellence conceived of in the abstract, which some might propose to substitute for the divine glory, be ever equivalent to regard to that excellence considered as existing absolutely perfect, in the character, and

exercised in the government of him, in whom “we live, and move, and have our being;” from whom all our happiness is derived; and on whom we and all things continually depend. We know that virtue, even as imperfectly exhibited in a few instances by men, commands more attention, and more powerfully awakens our feelings, than in the most brilliant and perfect delineation in the abstract. How powerful then must be its influence, if justly contemplated as ever living and ever acting, in the ever living and all moving God! In short, when we bid men act for the glory of God, we only bid them act in such a manner as to manifest a just, a supreme esteem for the excellences of his nature, a just, an unlimited confidence in them. Now, if at this principle, the infidel will still presume to sneer, he must begin with denying the existence of a God; or, if he admit this, then to support his scorn, he must deny either the perfection of the moral qualities of the divine character, or the obligation of moral and intelligent creatures to esteem them, and to imitate them in practice.

But though this, perhaps, be the most just and exalted view, in which a regard to the divine glory ought to influence our actions, it is perhaps also a view too abstracted and refined, to be easily apprehended by many minds; too general, perhaps, to be within their ability to apply in every case. It may be useful, therefore, to set that glory, and a concern for it, in a light more special still, a light in which it may without difficulty be apprehended and applied by all. And I do believe that, in most instances, when Christian instructors urge men to act for the glory of God, there really is a more special view, in which they aim to recommend it; though that perhaps may not always be distinctly perceived even by themselves. At least to this conclusion I have been led, by analysing my own thoughts on such occasions, and endeavouring to ascertain the object to which they ultimately tended. And it is, *That due honour be paid to God, as the moral Governor of the world.* In this character of the Deity, all those relations in which we stand to him, that are most important to our personal welfare and happiness, are found. Redemption itself is but a part of his moral government. And as, in every case where the authority of a governor is

necessary, it is of importance that those over whom he rules, should act to him with the respect which becomes his office, it must be in the last degree important, that the great Governor of the universe should be duly honoured by all his subjects. And it will be found that the whole moral obligations of men and other rational creatures, whether in acting, or in enjoying, or in suffering, are resolvable into this: that every intelligent being is moral or immoral, his actions good or bad, according as he feels and manifests a fit respect for the supreme Governor, or the contrary.

The reverence due to a governor is founded, in a great measure, and in the first instance, on the importance of his office. But it depends also on the excellence of the laws which it is the object of his office to maintain and execute, and on that of his own character, as affording one of the chief securities for the proper execution of his office, from the due administration of the laws. And in exact proportion as those laws and that character rise in excellence they are entitled to higher respect. In the case, then, of the complete and unmingled excellence of Jehovah's laws, of the consummate and unsullied perfection of his character, respect is due in the highest possible degree. In this case, there exist none of those partial exceptions from prevailing excellence, which sometimes make the best systems of human law the topics of easy ridicule, even to persons incapable of appreciating their general worth; and which too often reduce, to the level of feeble and ordinary mortals, the characters of the mightiest chiefs and most illustrious sages.

Now, in this point of view, it is evident that every act of every moral agent does, in the most direct manner, either hinder or promote the glory of God. Every such act either accords with, or is contrary to that honour, which is due to him as the Moral Governor, whose law is the supreme rule of moral conduct. It is an expression either of fealty or rebellion, of reverence or contempt.

It is no doubt true that, even in this limited view, the glory of God shall be *finally* and illustriously established, whatever complexion the character of creatures may assume. But the direct and immediate effect of every sin is to detract from it; of every act of duty and of self-denial to support it.

Every sin is an indication that we do not properly regard it; a declaration that we make light of the authority of his law. It tends to confirm in ourselves, to excite and to strengthen in others, the neglect in principle, and the violation in practice of all those obligations, by which we are bound to him as his creatures and his subjects. And if we reflect how far the practical neglect or contempt of divine authority that is displayed in every criminal action, goes (farther perhaps than may be generally apprehended) to encourage by example a similar spirit, we must feel that a regard, alike to God and to man, calls on us to act, and to bid our brethren act, for the glory of God.

It is in the point of view which has now been brought forward, that God himself appears to demand of us a regard to his glory. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master. If I, then, be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts." And a due regard to the absolute property, and sovereign authority over all things, belonging to Jehovah, as the Lord of the universe, contrasted with the vain pretensions of idols, is that which the apostle inculcates in the comprehensive precept, "whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

At the principle thus explained, we may again assert that no infidel can scoff, unless he set out with impugning either the existence or the moral government of the Supreme ruler; or will be so hardy as to acknowledge these, and yet maintain that there are better laws than the laws of God, to be the rules of our practice; an authority more sacred to require our subjection, and characters better entitled to them than that of the Deity, to be the objects of our veneration. If he admit the government of God, the wisdom and perfections of the divine nature, and of the principles of the divine administration, he may dispute with us what, in a particular instance, really is the Creator's will; he may cavil at the authenticity of what we assert to be a revelation of it; but he cannot object to our recommending a regard to the glory of God, in other words, a concern that God may be duly honoured, as matter of universal and perpetual obligation. For, in truth, this is nothing more than to require that the

highest authority should command the most unreserved submission, that the most perfect laws should receive the most implicit obedience, and that the most excellent character should be regarded with the most consummate veneration. And when we thus demand what is morally good, as a tribute to the divine glory, we have the advantage of placing it in that light, in which its obligations must appear most sacred, and will be most commanding.

We may hence discern the reasonableness of those representations, in which God is spoken of as jealous for his own glory, and as regarding the infringement of what is due to it, with severe displeasure. These but expressively declare, in the language of men, what must eternally be, that the Mind, whose unchangeable attributes are perfect truth and reason, is concerned that reason and truth should prevail over falsehood and folly; that the latter should never supplant the former; and that the moral disorder and misery, which such a perversion of the just course of things would cause, may be prevented. To suppose the Deity indifferent to such objects, were to impeach his character, and to deny his perfections. The man who is indifferent to them, is a very wretch.

Hence, too, then, we have an answer to all the evils, which describe the sacred writers, and those who copy their example, as attributing to God a mean and unworthy passion, when they speak of him as concerned for his own glory,—as requiring in his creatures a supreme regard to it,—as punishing with inflexible strictness, the neglect or contempt of it,—as encouraging and protecting those who are devoted to it. From the nature of things, from his own nature, he must will that that, which is really best, should be most esteemed by all reasonable beings; that what is most entitled to deference and respect, should be most honoured and obeyed. The man who is greedy of praise, may be a contemptible and unworthy creature, because he insists on receiving what human nature can seldom merit in any great degree; and what probably, it may be evident, that he, in particular, never has deserved at all. The mortal who is ambitious of power, and offended because others do not submit to his authority, may be entitled to nothing but censure

and opposition ; because he displays an overbearing self-will, and would subject to a very fallible, perhaps a pernicious direction, the sentiments and conduct of his fellow-creatures. But to condemn the language which speaks of the Deity as prescribing his own praise, and requiring homage to his own majesty, is to assert that he ought to be willing that intelligent beings, formed after his own image, should contemplate the displays of consummate excellence, without any feeling of admiration ; that he ought to be indifferent whether their obedience and esteem be given to what is false, imperfect, and vicious, or to what is true, and just, and pure.

Thus also, shall we be able clearly to convict of sin, of a disregard at once to reason and to duty, all who are regardless of the glory of God ; to prove that, while they act a part so unreasonable and unjust, they must be the objects of the divine displeasure ; that they need a powerful atonement to do away the past guilt of this master sin, from which so many others take their rise ; and grace and repentance for the time to come.

Thus too, we may, by the clearest and most forcible reasons, impress on those who profess to fear and serve God, their obligation to do all things to his glory,—to have an eye to it in whatever they propose,—and even in suffering, to maintain such a spirit and demeanour, that nothing may escape them, inconsistent with the honour which is due to his character and government. Here, in short, is a distinct and easily intelligible view, in which we may inculcate on our own minds, and on the minds of others, a supreme regard to the divine glory, as eternally and universally binding. And to a believer in revelation what is conducive to this, is never far to seek or hard to find. He has but to turn to the law of his God, and it is there. He beholds it in “all things whatsoever Jesus hath commanded him.” For these he regards as the authentic statutes of the supreme moral Governor ; and he knows that he yields, or that he denies to Him the honour which is due, according as he violates or obeys them. And to the Christian, the obligation to glorify God, which, from the preceding statements, may be proved to be equally incumbent on all reasonable beings, comes powerfully enforced by what he owes to redeeming love, and the need, the

astonishing displays of the character of the Deity, afforded by the economy of our salvation.

This consideration too must make him feel how much enhanced in him is the sin of indifference to his Maker's honour; how much cause he has to lament his forgetfulness of it; how much to pray for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to make his understanding perceive all that he owes to it, for the abiding influence of that divine agent, that his heart may never lose the impression of his obligations.

We may remark also, that the subject, which we have been considering, may be employed to afford additional illustration of some important topics, to which our attention has lately been directed, on occasions of the same kind; and may give farther confirmation to others. The utter neglect of the glory of God by the mass of mankind, and the frequent inattention to it on the part even of those who are renewed in the spirit of their minds, are deplorable instances and proofs of the *exceeding sinfulness of sin*. In the universal proneness of the human race to forget God, and to let his glory pass unnoticed, we may see one of the strongest evidences and most degrading effects of our original and universal corruption. And these same considerations exhibit the importance of *setting the Lord always before us*; that by preserving the impressions of his continual presence with us, we may habitually bear in mind our obligations to seek his glory.

It may not be aside from the purpose of these observations, to observe farther, that even should we suppose the good of the creature, rather than the glory of the Creator, to be the end which moral agents ought chiefly to have in view; yet, to make the glory of God, in the manner above described, our immediate object, is the most certain, is the only way in which men can rationally propose to accomplish the other. We have seen that the good of the universe at large is a theme of which we can be no proper judges. And even when we descend to the good of the creature in particular instances, we shall find that, if we attend solely to this, we shall be liable to uncertainty in almost every step which we take to promote it, to error probably in most. For confessedly we know little of what is truly good either for ourselves or others. But if we believe that God has issued certain laws

for our government as his rational creatures, and that, to maintain this government, he exercises over us a rectoral and judicial authority, we have cause to infer that the surest and most successful mean to advance our own good, the good of those immediately connected with us, and the good of the vast intellectual whole, so far as it can be promoted by the actions or volitions of parts so insignificant as we, is to obey implicitly those laws, and to yield to that authority unlimited reverence and subjection. For as we have the repeated declarations of his word, that all his laws are for the profit and the happiness of the individuals who practise them, the benevolence of his nature, combined with his wisdom, affords the best reason to conclude that, in the structure of his laws, and the conduct of his government, he has attended to general, as well as to particular good ; and has given to his creatures the most infallible directions how both, so far as dependent on them, may be secured.

In fine, Fathers and Brethren, let us ever remember that the mighty object, of which I have presumed, though so inadequately, to treat, is peculiarly the object of our vocation. That men may be recovered to a state in which they shall possess capacity and encouragement to glorify God, in the manner which we have endeavoured to illustrate, and to excite them, in doing and in suffering, to keep that end steadily in view, is the purpose to which our labours should be zealously and unremittingly directed. If we lose sight of this, we are as men who shoot without an aim ; who act without an end, or not from the end which it is their business to pursue. On the other hand, while we make this our object, we may indeed fail, perhaps we may err, we shall certainly come short, in the means which we adopt to promote it : but we shall, at least, have the satisfaction of knowing that we are right as to our end. And the more steadily we are enabled to follow it, we have ground to hope that we shall be the more successfully directed to the fittest means : both as a supreme regard to this great end will sharpen our discernment to mark, and quicken our promptitude to seize, the means most likely to attain it ; and as it may be humbly expected that He from whom we are exhorted to ask wisdom, will afford the guidance of his Spirit, to direct to the best means, and to

the best use of them, the minds of those who habitually and dutifully hold in view the supreme end of their calling and endowments. And may God indeed enable us, and all who are called to serve him in the gospel of his Son, to live, to pray, and to preach for this end ; that “ he, in all things, may be glorified, through Jesus Christ.” Amen.

BRIEF THOUGHTS:

I.—CONCERNING THE GOSPEL, AND THE HINDRANCES
TO BELIEVE IT.

II.—CONCERNING THE WAY IN WHICH THE GOSPEL
BELIEVED GIVES PEACE AND HOPE.

III.—CONCERNING THE WAY IN WHICH A BELIEVER
COMES AT TRUE SATISFACTION ABOUT HIS
STATE TOWARDS GOD.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL PIKE,

LONDON.

PREFATORY NOTICE.

SAMUEL PIKE, the author of the following Tract, was born about the year 1717 at Ramsey, in Wiltshire. In his early life, in the obscurity of a country village, he acquired the elements of literary and theological knowledge, and discovered that enlightened piety and that love of truth, which characterised him through life. At a suitable age he entered the academy in London for preparatory study for the ministry. The learned John Eames, F.R.S., was his scientific tutor; and Mr. John Hubbard directed his theological studies. After completing his academical course, he became pastor of a congregation at Henley on the Thames, where he remained for a few years. In 1747 he was called to London, to succeed Mr. John Hill, whose "Sermons" are still highly esteemed, as minister of the Independent church meeting in Three Cranes, Thames Street, and was soon after chosen (then a high honour) one of the preachers of the Merchants' Lecture, Pinner's Hall. He also, for some time, in conjunction with Mr. Samuel Hayward, conducted a course of Casuistical Lectures on the Lord's day evenings, which was afterwards published under the title of "Cases of Conscience," and has passed through a number of editions. Some time after his settlement in London he opened an academy, in which he instructed a number of young men in the languages, in natural philosophy, and in theology. In 1753 he published a work entitled "Philosophia Sacra; or, The Principles of Natural Philosophy, extracted from Divine Revelation." The work discovered learning and ingenuity, but being based on a false principle, has, like the other illustrations and defences of Hutchinsonianism, fallen into not unmerited neglect. In the year 1755, he published, under the title, "A Form of Sound Words," an excellent analysis and explication of the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism. The "Let-

ters on Theron and Aspasio," by Sandeman, first published in 1757, attracted Mr. Pike's attention, and his study of these subjects led him to modify considerably his views respecting the nature of faith, and the manner in which it answers the purposes assigned to it in the plan of salvation. This change of opinion led, through a course of unpleasant controversy, to the termination of his ministerial relation with the church in Three Cranes' Court, in the year 1765. Soon after he joined the Sandemanian or Glassite church in Bull and Mouth street, who called him to the office of the eldership among them; he afterwards removed to a congregation in that connexion in Trowbridge, in his native county, where he laboured with much acceptance, till the infirmities of a premature old age came on him; and after a short confinement he died in the spring of 1773, at the age of 56 years. Calumnious reports were circulated as to his having contracted intemperate habits, and it was said he died under a cloud; but his biographer, Walter Wilson, Esq., no way prejudiced in his favour by attachment to his peculiar views, states that "he can assure his readers that such reports were utterly without foundation; and that he with great satisfaction takes the opportunity of publicly contradicting a report so calamitous to the reputation of an injured individual, and so unfavourable to the interests of religion."* In the prospect of dissolution, the principles unfolded in the following tract supported his heart. He was calm, resigned, and happy in the faith of the truth, and the hope of eternal life, and instead of his sun setting under a cloud it shone brilliant to the last.

The Tract that follows is composed of extracts from Mr. Pike's writings. The first part of it is to be found in his "Dispassionate Narrative of the Rise, Progress, and Issue of the Late Schism in the church under the pastoral care of Samuel Pike." London. 1760. Pages 93—106. The tenth section does not appear in any former reprint. The second part is taken from his "Free Grace indeed!" London. 1760. Pages 29—37. This part also does not appear in any former edition of the "Brief Thoughts." The third part is extracted from the same pamphlet, pages 62—78. In the year 1790, the late Charles Stuart, of Dumearn, Esq., M.D., the son-in-law of Dr. John Erskine, the friend of Andrew Fuller,

* History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches, vol. ii. page 97.

a man who united in a remarkable degree, to use Dr. M'Crie's words in reference to him, "the honourable feelings of the gentleman, the refined and liberal thinking of the scholar, and the unaffected and humble piety of the Christian," published without the author's name, the Tract, with the exceptions noted, under the title of "Brief Thoughts." It was adopted by the Edinburgh Society for publishing Religious Tracts, founded in 1793, and forms the fourteenth of their series. It was also received into the series of the London Religious Tract Society, and published in two tracts, No. 294, 295, with the separate titles of, "Hindrances to believe the Gospel," and "Rest in Christ." To the very neat edition of the Tract published in 48vo, at Kelso, 1851, the editor, the Rev. Horace Bonar, has appended as a third part, an excellent letter of the late Henry David Inglis, advocate, "On holding fast the beginning of our Confidence."

This Tract has been very highly estimated both by theologians and by Christians,—the former admiring its lucidity and comprehensiveness as a statement of doctrine; the latter delighting in it as "the sincere milk of the word," most wholesome spiritual food. There is an interesting incident in reference to it recorded in Dr. Hanna's *Life of Dr. Chalmers*. Soon after the publication of "The Farewell Address to the Parishioners of Kilmany," Dr. Stuart and the author met in the streets of Edinburgh, and got into a very animated conversation on religious subjects, particularly the nature of faith and its functions in the saving economy. Dr. Stuart was not quite satisfied with some of his friend's modes of expression on these subjects, and the long conversation did not seem to have removed the dissatisfaction. At last, just as they were about to part, Dr. Chalmers said, "If you wish to see my views clearly and distinctly stated, you will find them in a tract entitled 'Brief Thoughts.'" "Why," said Dr. Stuart, "that tract was published by me." Dr. Chalmers used to describe the whole scene very graphically, and adduce it as an instance of how men may think they differ, while really they agree.* It is very justly stated by the latest editor of the tract that "its great value is that it states the Gospel with such point and plainness, that in the simple statement of it mistakes are either prevented or corrected."

* *Life of Dr. Chalmers*, vol. i. page 370.

It is inserted in this Collection, not for its rareness but for its intrinsic excellence, and because appearing generally under the humble guise of a religious tract, it may fail to attract from students of divinity the attention it deserves, as a well-thought and clearly expressed illustration of some of the most important and difficult questions in Christian theology, both theoretical and practical. In conclusion, I repeat the declaration I have made elsewhere: "I consider these 'Brief Thoughts' as among the most precious of mere human compositions, containing a singularly clear scriptural statement of those principles which lie at the foundation of those just views of the Christian method of salvation which are, under divine influence, the great source both of holiness and comfort."

BRIEF THOUGHTS:

I. CONCERNING THE GOSPEL, AND THE HINDRANCES TO BELIEVE IT.

1. THE word gospel properly signifies good news, or glad tidings, and may be used to denote good news of any kind; but the gospel, eminently so called, is a message sent, or brought to us from heaven of good things. The substance of it is, to declare to the fallen, condemned sinners of the human race, that Jesus is the Christ, who came into the world to save the chief of sinners: that God hath given us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son; that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, &c. All these things taken together in their blessed and extensive import, as centring in one point, are the gospel. And these things are told us openly and freely, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, we might have life through his name, or in what is declared concerning him as the Saviour. This gospel was preached to Adam, in the first promise; to Abraham, in its being told him, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; to Israel typically, in the whole system of sacrifices; prophetically, in the psalms, and in all the prophets; and it is now exhibited to us, historically and doctrinally, in the New Testament, in the relation it gives us of the birth, life, death, resurrection, and glorification of our Lord Jesus, and the account it gives us of the true and glorious design of all these things. Were we to sum up the whole, we shall find it to be, as to its general subject, a declaration of free and full salvation in Jesus Christ, addressed to lost, helpless,

and condemned sinners. The redemption obtained by Jesus Christ, is presented to our view as quite necessary for our salvation, as quite suitable to our condition, as quite free for our encouragement, and as quite full or complete for our supply.

2. This representation is so great and glorious, and contains such joyful particulars, that one would imagine, it could not fail of affording at once the most enlivening light, the most satisfying hope, the most solid joy, and spiritual strength and life to our souls. Such is certainly its nature, such is plainly its tendency, and such is its real influence and effect, wherever its meaning, its evidence, and its importance, are understood and received. This we are certain never will be, without the divine teaching or influence of the Spirit of truth and grace.

However, hereby the most interesting message, and the most gladdening tidings are brought us. This message some neglect, others misunderstand; some despise, and others dispute it; while many understand it so defectively, that it conveys no more pleasure or satisfaction to their minds than if they had never heard it, or did not at all understand it. So that many persons sit under the sound of it, who are very little, if at all, enlivened, encouraged, or attracted thereby. This proceeds from some remaining difficulties or objections, which still possess their minds, and obstruct the joy, satisfaction, hope, and love, that would otherwise arise in their minds upon the belief of it. For it is evident, that when this was preached of old, they who heard and understood it were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord. Acts xiii. 48.

3. Let us therefore search a little into this matter, and attend to the objections and difficulties which rise in the mind; whereby it comes to pass, that many receive no comfort and advantage to their souls by the declaration of it: so that it proves in reality no gospel to them. For we must necessarily take it for granted, that it is in itself a message of great joy; otherwise it would not have received the name it bears.

It is evident, then, that to many these glad tidings do not convey any pleasure, because they do not appear suited to

their wants and desires. It is to them a thing quite foreign from their thoughts and wishes; and so they despise or neglect it. One says in his heart, "If you could bring me tidings of some worldly honours to be freely conferred, or of some large sums of money to be freely given, this would rejoice my heart. Or if you could tell me where and how I might enjoy such and such sensual pleasures, this would be very acceptable."

The language spoken by the hearts of others is to this effect: "If you could assure me any way, that I could live and indulge myself in sin, &c., with hopes of impunity, without fear of death or hell, this would be very good news to me." But it is evident, in both these cases, the sentiments of the heart are directly contrary to the truth of God. For the former account the world their chief portion, and the latter esteem sin their greatest good. They do not perceive, they do not really believe, the suitableness and importance of the salvation in Jesus Christ to their souls; and therefore it does not wear the aspect of good news in their view.

To others, the proclamation of salvation only in Christ is not good news; because they do not see it to be quite necessary for them. They do not think their case to be really so bad, as a full and free salvation intimates. They do not apprehend themselves quite lost, undone, and helpless; but think they can, they must, and ought to do something towards their own recovery to the favour of God.

As the free gospel opposes all such self-sufficient desires and endeavours, it is therefore rather disgusting and offensive.—Such as these do not know either themselves, or the law, or the true God.

4. But after all, there is another great reason why the glad tidings of the blessed gospel do not convey any real satisfaction; and that is, because the proper freeness of divine grace revealed is not discerned nor credited. The language of many persons is this: "I do not deny or question the perfection of Christ's work, and the freeness of his redemption: I have heard these things, and am persuaded of them, and yet still I feel myself lost, and miserable, and helpless, and do not find that all this conveys any pleasure or satisfaction to my mind; for I have still many objections against myself,

and many doubts and difficulties in my mind in relation to my salvation."—What these are, or may be, we shall soon attend to.—But do you indeed believe the proper freedom of divine grace? How comes it to pass then, that you are not encouraged by, and delighted with it, when it is certain it must be so in any similar case?

If a person in great want be told of a free supply; or a person in debt, ready to be arrested, be told of a free, able, and willing surety; could this fail of giving him pleasure, hope, and satisfaction, on his hearing and believing it? And if it did not, would not every by-stander judge, that there must be some mistake or doubt in his mind about it?—There must therefore be some defect or mistake in our apprehension, if we have not some satisfying hope produced in our minds, from the free gospel, of full salvation in Jesus Christ, for an helpless, undone sinner.

5. Let me then represent, as clearly as I can, what must be, or may be, the mistake or doubt in the minds of many.

"The gospel affords not relief to my mind (says one), because my sin and guilt have been greater than many, than most, or than any others. Mine iniquities have increased over my head, and my transgressions mount up to the very heavens. Look where I will, I can find no relief; whether I look backward, inward, forward, or upward, all is dark and dreadful. My case is so peculiar, my sins are so aggravated, &c. I cannot apprehend that divine grace should reach directly to such a one as me." I answer, Are any guilty sinners excluded out of the proclamation of grace? If they were, the gospel would cease to be glad tidings, not only to you, but to every one else: for we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God; and if God should mark iniquities, none could stand. You think that the gospel may be joyful tidings to others, but not to you. But why so? You say, Because they are not so bad as I am, and have been. This is the same as to say, That because others are in some respects better than you, therefore they have more reason and better ground, to hope in Christ than you have. But whoever thinks thus, it is evident, does not apprehend the grace of God in Christ to be properly and directly free; and he imagines, that he must be somewhat better than he is, before

he may hope in Christ. But we are directly told, That Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners; and that this faithful saying is worthy of all acceptance; and consequently, worthy of your acceptance, whoever you be, or whatsoever you have been. You are right if you think yourself the chief of sinners; but you wrong the grace and gospel of Christ, if you think or say, That you are not as welcome as any sinner upon the face of this earth to the redemption by Jesus Christ. In truth, such despondent and apparently humble confessions, if examined to the bottom, will be found, when they obstruct our hope, to be no more than the conviction and the regret that we want materials for erecting an altar to our pride; that we are destitute of a justifying righteousness, which we are anxiously labouring after; they are but the painful lamentation arising out of the disappointed desire of attaining life, as it were, by the works of the law; and they consist well, if we look into them seriously, with the notion, that there is a great deal of good in our hearts, in our motives, if not in our actions, though there be somewhat lacking, at the same time, to give us perfect confidence before God.

6. Another may be saying in his thoughts, "But after all that the gospel reveals, it is no comforting or satisfying news to me; because I remember, that Christ did not purchase this redemption for all mankind; neither has God purposed it for all; and therefore, though I know that those who shall be saved, are saved by grace quite free and sovereign, yet I can be no way comforted by this, because I have no marks or evidences in my favour, to prove that I am of the number of the elected and redeemed. I can therefore only entertain a general possibility, that I may be saved as well as another; but this is far from being sufficient to afford peace to my soul and conscience." I readily reply, It is a real and important truth, that election and redemption are thus particular and sovereign, not universal nor conditional. But remember, though the redemption by Christ is not universal in its intention, yet it is so in its proclamation to be believed for salvation. John iii. 14—19. Read over these verses, and you may see, that here is good news, here are glad tidings indeed, presented to gain the confidence of poor helpless sin-

ners. This free grace requires no previous marks or evidences of our own particular election or redemption, in order to afford immediate relief to the mind, in believing it to be thus open and free. It is true, God by his word requires us to believe the doctrines of particular election and redemption, in order to give us a view of the sovereignty of his grace, and to prevent us from thinking it to be any way conditional or suspended upon any actings of ours. But yet it does by no means require us to believe our own particular election or redemption, in order to our hope God-ward. It presents the redemption of Jesus Christ directly before us as full and free; and wheresoever this takes proper effect upon the mind, conscience, and conduct, this is the proper and sure evidence of our own election. For our election of God is known by the gospel coming with power, &c. 1 Thess. i. 4. 5. Say not then, Who shall ascend into heaven, to see whether our names are in the book of life? But look into the gospel, and see whether thy name, as a sinner, be not there; and whether the grace therein revealed, is not free for thee, and for any.

7. Another's thought may be working this way: "But, alas! after all you can say, or I can find in the word, about the freedom of divine grace, it gives me no satisfaction; for I know that the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary to bring the soul and Christ together; and because I do not find his influence upon my heart, I am therefore greatly perplexed, and at as great a loss almost as if there was no such gospel preached to me."

I answer, It is very certain and undoubted, that the Spirit's work is necessary, sovereign, and effectual. But what then? Must we feel or be conscious of any work of the Spirit upon our hearts, before we believe the testimony of free grace to the satisfaction of our consciences. If so, this would utterly overturn the open freedom of the grace of God; and the work of the Spirit would be so explained and conceived, as to stand in opposition to the word of the gospel. In my view, there is scarcely a clearer proof of the necessity of the Spirit's work to show us the true grace of God, than the continual propensity appearing in us, thus to pervert it or mistake it, and to aim at placing even the con-

sciousness of the Spirit's work between a free Christ and our souls. The Spirit's work is to show us the things of Christ, and to make us know the grace of God in the truth. Read the account given of his work and office, in John xvi. 7—11, and 1 Cor. ii. 9—19, where it is most fully explained; and there you will see, that his work does by no means stand in opposition to the freedom of gospel-grace: but, on the contrary, it is a confirmation of it; for he sets his seal to it, when he brings this free grace to our minds, and so gives us peace and satisfaction from it.

8. The mind of another person may be perplexed in this way: "I can receive no satisfaction to my soul from the gospel-report, because the Scripture says, 'Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Now I know not whether I am regenerated or no; I cannot find to my satisfaction that I have any principle of grace in my heart; and therefore I can have no true pleasure or peace, unless I can some way or other be assured of this." In this manner many souls bring in abundance of objections against themselves, and make the glad tidings of salvation in Christ of none effect to them; because they conceive, that a consciousness of their own regeneration is previously necessary to peace and hope God-ward.

But remember, such is the freeness of grace, that an assurance of our being regenerated, is no way previously necessary to our resting our souls upon free forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel. Suppose then you do not know your own regeneration, should this hinder you, should this discourage you, from believing free forgiveness, and so enjoying a conscious interest therein by faith? Remember likewise, that so far as the thought of these defects discourages you, so far they intimate, that you are seeking your encouragement some way in and from yourselves. But behold, all this which you imagine you must be conscious of, to beget and maintain hope towards God; all this, I say, is the effect of the faith of the gospel upon the mind; for we are regenerated by the word of truth. James i. 18. It is therefore a sense and sight of this free-grace-truth which lies at the bottom of all the true change made in our thoughts, affections, and conduct.

9. But some may farther say, "Faith is necessary to salvation; now I cannot find any faith in me; I cannot exert the act of trusting aright. I am not able. I have not strength to believe." I reply, If by this complaint you mean, that you cannot believe divine grace to be so free, that you may directly rest your soul upon it; that you are not persuaded of the free ability of Christ to save to the uttermost; then I am called upon to offer evidence for it from the divine word, and to prove it from thence to your conviction, on purpose that you may be persuaded of it, and satisfied by it.

But if you still say, "I have no doubt about that; only I can receive no comfort from it, for want of having, and discerning faith, and its exercises and actings in my soul." Then it is evident, you are now conceiving faith, and its actings, in such a light as to be a sort of objection to the open, direct freeness of divine grace; and so instead of believing it, you do in fact object to it. Whereas, if you did really believe it in its proper view, you would not make your want of anything in yourself (call it faith, or by any other name) an objection; but would directly have hope and relief from what you believe concerning the grace of God in Christ; and being thus encouraged and relieved, you would then know experimentally, what it is to hope, trust, love, &c., which you strive at otherwise in vain.

10. But to conclude. Some may still say, "I cannot, I dare not rest satisfied in the general hope of the gospel: Because it does not, it cannot of itself (let me believe it ever so clearly and firmly) assure me of my own particular interest in Christ, or that I shall be saved by him. The gospel is only a general open proclamation; it does not say directly to any one, you are elected, redeemed, regenerated, or in a state of salvation." This is indeed a very great entanglement to many minds; and it is often so impressed, as to render the gospel in all its glory and freedom, of but little use to relieve or support the soul. It appears very defective and insufficient under such apprehensions, and hereby many are so distressed, that they are driven to esteem the gospel insufficient, and to aim to introduce or seek after something more than what is therein exhibited, to raise, support, encourage, and strengthen the

soul. But I apprehend this arises from one or other of these causes.

Either (1.) a defective view of the proper freedom of divine grace; or else (2.) a desire after and an eagerness for such an assurance of salvation, as is neither necessary for us, nor would be useful to us.

As to the First, What though the gospel proclamation is open, general and unrestrained, why may it not exhibit a free welcome, and afford an immediate ground of hope and encouragement, to any sinner as such?

If many persons are bidden to a feast, and have all the same welcome, is there a necessity for any of those to have a more special right than the others, to make their way clear? If then in the present case we take God at his word without doubting or disputing; we shall see enough in the free welcome to remove our discouragements, to satisfy our minds, and to give us peace and hope; without wanting or searching for a better warrant or a clearer right than we have in common as sinners, through the free gospel. The openness and unlimitedness of it to sinners as such directly, is so far from being an objection, that it is the very reason why hope and peace is received immediately from it. Were it not so, any particular person may well doubt whether remission and salvation are proclaimed freely to him. But in a full clear view of this freedom, any helpless sinner may say in his heart, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want;" just in the same sense, as a poor object that is clearly persuaded of a free welcome to a well furnished table of a friend may say, That person is my friend, therefore I shall never be starved.

And as to the other difficulty, it is of this nature. Persons desire to have such an assurance of salvation, as is no way needful at first for our hope God-ward. Were we to be directly assured of our own special interest, particular election and certain salvation, this would open a door for presumption, and an Antinomian abuse of the grace of God: which the gospel abhors.

There is enough in the mere free gospel, to prevent all tormenting discouragement and anxiety, and to lay a foundation, for the most cordial love and most cheerful and ready obedience towards God in Christ. And upon this principle all

the exhortations to trust, love, and obedience proceed ; and indeed without it, there could be nothing of any of these things truly in our hearts or lives. As to our own particular or special interest, there can be no true satisfaction about it, but in trusting, loving, and obeying upon the footing of the free gospel. Thus there is a security against any abuse, if it be rightly understood : for a person cannot gratify himself in any thing contrary to the rules of the word, without saying in his heart, that something besides a free Christ is his hope and portion. Whereas, on the other hand, while we proceed upon gospel principles in our affections and practice, we shall not be destitute of the witness and seal of the Spirit to our adoption.

The intention of all that has been said, is only to show that the proper, immediate, unconditional freedom of divine grace, is that which stands foremost in the gospel declaration ; and that it is this which constitutes it properly gospel, to poor, perishing, helpless, condemned sinners of mankind.

There is nothing previous to this freedom of grace, nothing seen, felt, heard, or understood, that can afford any degree of true belief to the distressed soul, or guilty conscience. While this mere grace is so rich, full, and free, that it is sufficient in the hands of the divine Spirit to give immediate and proper relief. Wheresoever this is properly understood and really credited, in its evidence and importance, it is such good news that it conveys peace and rest to the mind before God, and so it is verified, "We which have believed do enter into rest," Heb. iv. 3. And this comfortable satisfaction is such as becomes the spring of all gospel love, patience, repentance, and obedience, in a continued belief and view of this free love proclaimed in the blessed gospel.

Neither are those true and important doctrines of distinguishing grace, any way opposite to, denied by, or inconsistent with this free gospel hope. For it is this free grace gospel believed, or which is the same, it is the grace of God in Christ known and believed which pacifies the conscience, comforts the heart, strengthens the soul, purifies the affections, and attracts to love and obedience.

Those who are thus pacified, comforted, &c., are true believers, who live by the faith of the Son of God, in a con-

tinued dependence upon and regard to Christ as their light, life, joy, strength, and portion. These shall certainly persevere, for God has by his Spirit, through the word, put his fear and shed abroad his love in their hearts, that they might not depart from him.

Blessed are they that know the joyful sound; they shall walk in the light of God's countenance; for the more they know of it, and enjoy the holy satisfaction flowing from it; the more they appear to be under the real influence of the blessed Spirit of truth and grace; the more evident both to themselves and others, is their election, their particular redemption, their real regeneration and effectual calling. For God hath chosen his people to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, whereunto they are called, by the gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.

And O may the Lord the Spirit make every one of us know more and more the excellency and glory of this free grace, and remove those clouds that frequently interpose between the Sun of Righteousness and our souls; that we may be filled with all joy and peace in believing, and so may abound in hope and in true holiness, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

BRIEF THOUGHTS:

II. CONCERNING THE WAY IN WHICH THE GOSPEL BELIEVED GIVES PEACE AND HOPE.



THERE is a certain central truth, which runs through the Bible from the beginning to the end, and which we may be tempted to overlook or not to discern in its proper importance and beauty, amidst a firm belief of all the distinguishing doctrines of Calvinism, as they are usually stated; and I think of no better form of expressing it at present, than this, ‘Jesus Christ in all his grace and fulness, is declared in the gospel for this very purpose, to appear as the only, the immediate and the sure foundation of a lost sinner’s hope, as such.’ Without multiplying words at present to expatiate upon, to explain and prove, this principle, I would rather illustrate it by setting forth some of the proper effects thereof upon the mind and heart. This truth, I say, when clearly understood and believed upon divine evidence, does immediately silence the objections and remove the discouragement of the convinced sinner. Nay, the very belief of this truth, evidently contains in it a conviction of the sinner’s helpless and hopeless condition in himself; for otherwise, Christ would not appear as his only foundation of hope. And when the soul beholds Christ as his immediate and sure foundation, he cannot but have some peace of conscience, and some encouraging sense of the divine free favour; such as draws off the heart (in proportion to the efficacy of the truth upon the mind) from self, sense, and sin, and produces a love to God in Christ, and so becomes a principle of all gospel obedience. So necessary is this truth, that unless it be properly under-

stood and cordially believed, all the other doctrines of the word can have very little efficacy upon the mind ; yea, no evangelical effect at all. But if this truth be received, or introduced into the conscience, all the other doctrines of the word will be found not only consistent with it, but connected with it, illustrated by it and subservient to it. This central doctrine is what is more emphatically called the Truth or the Gospel ; and stands distinguished from the other truths of the word in several passages of sacred writ. For instance, is the doctrine of particular election a gospel truth ? We are said to be “chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Is the doctrine of regeneration a divine truth ? We are said to be “begotten, through ” the gospel, or with “the word of truth.” As to adoption, it is said, “we are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus.” As to sanctification, it is said, we are “sanctified through the truth :” and as to perseverance, it is plain, we are “kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation ;” and so as to spiritual consolation, it is evident, we are “filled with all joy and peace in believing.” This central truth is the principal and proper matter of faith, and Christ or God in Christ appearing in it, is the proper and only object of faith. In beholding and believing the absolute necessity, entire perfection and the immediate unconditional freeness of God’s grace in Christ, we have our self-righteous confidence opposed and suppressed, and have the discouragements of our souls in measure removed. In this truth we have Christ and all his salvation brought near, exceedingly, immediately near to our souls and to our case ; so that nothing appears to stand between him and us, however unworthy, guilty, polluted and miserable we have been ; and therefore as soon as ever it is rightly perceived, and actually believed, we “being justified by faith, have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

It is evident I am not here pleading for what is commonly called a bare historical faith, wherein a person looks upon himself as a sort of a bystander with respect to the matter of his faith ; for whosoever does not see that the gospel report points directly at him and at his own case, cannot be said to apprehend the truth in its proper light. It is indeed certain,

that almost every other doctrine may be perceived in a kind of speculative or historical manner; a person may believe and contemplate the doctrines of particular election and redemption as a bystander, because he does not see his own immediate personal concern in it. The same may be said of the doctrines of efficacious grace and of the saints' perseverance. If a person does not see that what the gospel says of Christ and salvation by him is entirely necessary for him, exactly suited to his case, and free for his use, he is still kept at some distance; apprehending the doctrines of grace to be little more than a general declaration of what God intends to do or has done upon or for some sinners, without seeing any personal concern of his own in the matter.

I am very sensible that the doctrines of the Bible are often conceived in such a light as to become a sort of objection against the open freeness of the hope held forth in the gospel: for we are very ready to say in our mind, that since God does not tell us who in particular were elected and redeemed, or who shall be wrought upon effectually, &c., therefore a person must be sensible of some visible or real change passed upon him for the better, before he may or can venture to receive any degree of satisfying hope in Christ Jesus revealed in the gospel. But if we can recollect that particular election and redemption, and that the operations of the Spirit are intended to bring sinners to know and embrace this hope of the gospel; it will then appear that all these doctrines are rather a confirmation of, than an objection against, this blessed hope. For the conscientious belief of this gospel truth, is above and contrary to our natures; as it draws us off from all that which we are naturally attached to and fond of. We are always inclined to oppose, mistake, despise or suspect this hope; and are very ready to understand the gospel, in such a light as leaves some room for self-dependence, self-indulgence, or for entertaining some delusive hopes. For these reasons, together with others, there is an entire necessity for the divine agency of the Holy Spirit, to introduce it into our consciences and maintain it in our hearts. I might here further observe, that this truth makes the gospel-hope appear so free and humbling, that we naturally scorn it, as it sets us all upon a level before God: that it

appears to us to be very defective, narrow, weak and foolish, because it does not give us directly such a full satisfaction concerning our own special interest, as should leave us in a kind of state of safety somewhat independent upon God in Christ believed on: that it is offensive to our corrupted nature, because it obliges us to live so near to and so constantly dependent upon an infinitely holy and sovereign God. In a word, our natural wish and desire is, to have something in ourselves to be a ground and reason of peace and hope towards God; and therefore we are fond of leaning upon and desirous to prop up some such kind of hope; while we are averse to and suspicious of that sure foundation which God has laid in Zion, because it is something distinct from the consideration of any thing in ourselves. All these things, with many more, concur to render it necessary for a divine almighty agency to be employed in writing this truth upon our hearts. But when this supernatural truth is made by the Spirit to take possession of our souls, it draws us off from our natural wish and desire, from self-dependence and self-indulgence, and leads us to look to and live upon God in Christ as our only and entire hope and portion, as our free refuge and sanctuary. Hereupon there begin to appear some evidences of our particular election and redemption. The immortal seed of the word is sown in the heart, a new principle introduced, a new spring of affections and actions is given; whereby the soul is rendered capable of holding communion with God, and aims from this hope and love after conformity to Christ. And as such things as these appear and advance in the affections and conduct, the evidences of a special interest in Christ are discovered. Not that this person's hope, pleasure and satisfaction arises only or chiefly from these evidences of interest; but from the glory, perfection and freeness of divine grace appearing in a revealed Christ. For it is this which he has all along in his eye, for his hope and dependence, while he advances forward in bringing forth such fruits of faith as show him to be a disciple of Christ. In proportion then as the believer is favoured with this satisfaction from the freeness of divine grace revealed, the fruits of it appear; and in that proportion his evidences are brightened: but as these things decline, his evidences of interest disappear.

I am very sensible after all that has been said, that the turning, pinching point lies in this question: 'Is it possible for that truth, which has a uniform aspect towards all sinners as such, and which is as true concerning those that perish as those that are saved, to give any solid satisfaction, or to afford solid hope to any individual?'

An answer to this question in the affirmative, may readily be accounted very enthusiastical; and the laying any stress upon such a truth for satisfying peace and hope, may be thought both unaccountable and dangerous; as if there could not be sufficient in it, to bear the weight that is laid upon it. But let not our reason at once boldly judge it to be impossible! Who knows what the wisdom of God can contrive and declare? And I hope to make it appear both from fact, from doctrine and from experience, that this is the very case with respect to the important doctrine before us. Unless there be a truth in this, the gospel cannot be accounted glad tidings of great joy to all people: the joy of the primitive Christians upon their first apprehending and believing the gospel, will appear to be without a proper foundation. And unless there be some solid joy and peace to be had from the pure gospel believed, we could never be able to perform any duties, or exercise any graces in an evangelical way, until we could arrive at some assurance of our own personal interest; but how any such assurance can be had, before evangelical duties are performed, or gospel experiences felt, is not conceivable.

But after all, it will still be inquired, Is it possible for a person to receive any solid satisfaction from a doctrine that is as true concerning those that perish, as those that are saved? I answer, we need not look far for proper similitudes to illustrate this matter by. If two persons are under the same disease, and both of them are told of the same free remedy; he that upon the relation believes the remedy to be effectual and free, is immediately comforted in his mind with hopes of a cure, and accordingly applies; while he that suspects either the efficacy or freeness of it, receives no relief to his mind about it, and perhaps perishes under the disease; though the remedy was as effectual in its nature, and as free in itself, with respect to his case as to the other's.

I might add a variety of similar comparisons, borrowed both from nature and scripture, to exemplify or familiarize this subject: such as a testimony concerning a free gift to be received; a free prop to lean upon, &c. Now in such cases as these, it is certain, that if a person's mind be not in some measure relieved, pacified and encouraged by such a report, he does not really believe it, however he may profess it; but entertains some objections or scruples in his mind about it, unless he be supposed to be absolutely stupid and unconcerned about his own disease, want, or danger; in which case it is plain, he is not apprized of the necessity of such a relief for himself. Now when a person receives his hope and peace from such a free open testimony, he is not relieved by the thought of any difference between him and another, to whom it is as free and suitable as to himself; neither does he apprehend himself to have a better right or a clearer interest than another: but his satisfaction arises from the truth reported, which he apprehends and believes, though another does not. Now to bring this over to spiritual concerns. The free grace truth of the gospel affords hope and encouragement, and becomes the foundation of all those actings of the believing soul, commonly called acts of faith, but may be more properly called actings of love (for faith always operates by love) such as trusting, coming, embracing, and the like: for no person will come to Christ or trust in God, or embrace the promises, unless he has first a love in his soul to God in Christ, arising from a view and belief of his free grace. Neither are these actings of the mind to be considered as any arduous or difficult attempt in order to obtain peace and hope towards God; for they naturally arise and flow from the encouraging and soul-pacifying truth believed. They are merely motions or thoughts of the mind, generated and excited by the gracious truth believed. For in such spiritual cases we must cast aside all the external acts of the body, by which they are represented and expressed, and built upon. While this truth is clear in a person's mind, he can and does rest upon it, or rather upon God in Christ revealed therein; and so it becomes his continual support and refreshment, yea, and his continual motive to love and obedience. This is living by the faith of the Son of God. And

in proportion as a person is quickened, enlivened, animated and supported hereby; in that proportion he is conscious of his connection with Christ, and vital union to him: because he now knows and feels in his own heart, that he has his strength and comfort directly and immediately from Christ revealed. Thus God gives his people a sense of his love, an enjoyment of his favour, and a proof, seal, or evidence of their own interest in him. If a person loses sight of the truth, or is turned from it in any degree; he so far can have no true rest, and is in danger of seeking rest from some other quarter, or settling his hopes upon some false foundation. Thus he loses the true enjoyment of God's favour, and can never be recovered to it, but by being driven off from every other attempt, and having this truth afresh revived upon his mind, by some means or other. And among the various methods which the Spirit may use to recover a backslider, an eminent one is: to bring to remembrance past experiences of the efficacy of the gospel; not that his comfort may arise from those experiences, but from that free and perfect grace that lay at the foundation of them. The belief of this truth, together with its genuine influence upon the heart and conduct, is that which distinguishes believers from unbelievers. And whatever physical influences of the Spirit may be supposed in the matter of regeneration and sanctification, separate from the truth believed; these can have no apparent share in pacifying the conscience and comforting the heart, as they are in their own nature utterly invisible, and so cannot become a matter of Christian experience. Neither must any thing previous to or distinct from the thought of a free and perfect Saviour be here admitted, for giving ease to the conscience; if it be, the peace resulting from thence is delusive, and derogatory to the all-sufficiency of Christ's work.

I would farther observe, that upon this plan, true holiness and true consolation keep pace with each other; until we come to such a situation, as to be beyond all hazard of losing this holy enjoyment in any degree, which cannot be till we come to glory. Thus likewise the believer is kept in a state of constant immediate dependence upon God; so that while he is guarded against any abuses on the one hand, lest a

promise being left of entering into God's rest, he should seem to come short of it; he has on the other hand sufficient encouragement and pleasure in the way of gospel holiness; being attracted and enlivened by the continual hope of the free gospel. The believer has at no time ground to say, "My mountain stands strong, and I shall never be moved;" but he has at all times reason to say, "The Lord is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;" and he actually does say it in his heart, as long as he is favoured with the sight of the necessity, sufficiency and freeness of divine grace in Christ for himself.

The believer's peace and joy then, rises and sinks just in proportion as he perceives the evidence of this gospel truth, as pointing to himself as well as to any other; accordingly, he cannot tread in any forbidden path for peace and comfort with this truth in his eye, without being struck with the solemn reflection, that he is now departing from the true God, undervaluing the hope of the gospel, and despising that love which is as jealous as it is attractive. The room that is left for this solemn reflection, is that which keeps us in a state and sense of absolute, constant, immediate dependence upon God in Christ. This is indeed what we very much want, and aim to be set free from in some degree and in some way or another. But the gospel in its purity will not permit it. Let it not here be thought, that this manner of stating things produces a slavish fear of divine wrath; for "he is not afraid of evil tidings whose heart is fixed trusting in the Lord." So that his fear only serves to keep or drive him from every false way and dangerous refuge, and to fix his heart and hope upon God in Christ, as his only hope and portion.

BRIEF THOUGHTS:

III. CONCERNING THE WAY IN WHICH A BELIEVER COMES AT TRUE SATISFACTION ABOUT HIS STATE TOWARDS GOD.



1. No question has ever been stated of greater consequence to our peace and comfort than this—We know that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. As soon as the king of terrors has given the mortal stroke, our souls must launch into an unknown eternity, and enter on a state of everlasting happiness or misery. Our own consciences sometimes place us beforehand in the presence of God, the Judge of all. And a time will speedily come, when we shall approach to the very borders of eternity. If conscience be now awake, the question presses upon the mind with the greatest importunity, “How can I be satisfied as to the concerns of my immortal soul?”—If Christians in general were but thus brought solemnly to realize these important matters, they would presently apprehend in their very hearts, that nothing less than a foundation entirely safe, and a hope absolutely sure, would serve their purpose.

2. But where is that to be found which is sufficient to support the soul and conscience in the agonies of death, and the prospect of an unchangeable condition? Where is that which will give satisfying relief to the conscience and a clear confidence before God? All will immediately say, *In Jesus Christ alone*. But doth this answer still leave room for such questions as these? “How shall I come at Christ? or how shall I be assured of my interest in him? What shall, or what must I do to obtain it? or what must I experience or

practise in order to gain this satisfaction?" Here come in abundance of perplexing queries, and a scene of important difficulties not easy to be solved. So that professors are almost as much at a loss about their everlasting state, as if they had heard nothing of Christ, and his work for sinners.

To obtain satisfaction in this, we set about examining our own hearts and ways, our past conduct, or past experiences, in hopes of finding something there, which may be the means of allaying our fears, and easing our consciences. We look with eagerness and solicitude into every corner of our hearts, to see whether in the midst of all the bad we find there, we cannot find something good wrought in us, or something truly gracious in our experiences, that may be a proper satisfying proof of our special interest. Perhaps we discern some probable evidences in our favour: we think we have felt some distinguishing experiences; and thus obtain ease and relief. But what if it should appear after all, that these evidences are attended with uncertainty? What if there be some reason to suspect that they may be delusive? How then can the mind be eased, or the conscience pacified upon this plan?—While we are thus anxiously employed, seeking rest to our souls, we are under a strong bias to think the best, and make the best, of what we find and feel. How then can we know, but that under the influence of such a propensity, we may actually put a cheat upon ourselves, through a fond desire to apprehend that our state is at bottom safe and good? And what if our deceitful hearts should succeed, in this case, in bringing us into a delusion? Where are we then?—Perhaps these thoughts, at first view, seem to take away all use for marks and signs. But they do not, as we shall soon see. However that be, no one, I think, can deny or evade the force of them, how searching or discouraging soever they may seem. But there are some further thoughts equally alarming, which must not be omitted. Have not many made a shining profession, and, in their own and others' apprehension, been favoured with the most distinguishing experiences who yet have turned out hypocrites and apostates? Have not many talked high things about the witness, seal, and earnest of the Spirit, as enjoyed by themselves, who yet have been in the event found liars?

Again, are there not counterfeit graces, comforts, and experiences? Can these things be denied? Upon this plan for obtaining peace, we must therefore distinguish very nicely, before we can be supposed to arrive at any degree of certainty, by discriminating what is genuine from what is counterfeit; and after all, most probably the matter must remain in doubtful, sad suspense. How then can we have any solid peace? Again, perhaps we are in such circumstances as to the distress of our souls, or as to approaching death, that a speedy answer must be given, or the soul sinks under its load, and runs almost into desperation. Many inexpressible struggles are produced in the soul, perhaps when there is neither time nor capacity to examine the matter sufficiently. And yet in the midst of these unhappy circumstances, if a person discerns the infinite importance of his soul, he sees that nothing short of that certainty upon which he may immediately rest, will afford him satisfaction.

3. But does the divine word leave us in such a perplexity as this? If it does, where is our hope, our rest, our confidence?

Must not Christianity be, upon this plan, a very uncomfortable religion; a very uncertain scheme for hope and peace toward God? And does it not, in this way, actually leave us, yea, and oblige us, to take the chief of our hope and comfort directly from what we may be supposed to have felt or done? Behold, in the midst of all these inextricable perplexities, the gospel proclaims the Lord Jesus Christ, and all his salvation, open and free for the sure relief and hope of the distressed and guilty soul. If this be discerned in its beauty and importance, how necessary, how valuable, encouraging, and attracting, must the hope of the gospel appear! Now while every thing else proves uncertain, this is certain; when every other refuge and support fails, this appears sufficiently firm and free: it is found a safe retreat, a sure foundation, a sufficient stay; detached from every other thought and consideration.

But perhaps your anxious minds will here object, "How can I be satisfied without an assurance of my own special interest in Christ; the general declaration of the gospel cannot afford me this, because it bears an equal aspect to all

sinner as such?" But I would ask again, What kind of assurance do you want? Do you want to be so certified of your everlasting welfare, as to be set at rest from all sort of fear? Do you want to be able to say, "My mountain stands strong, and I shall never be moved?" Do you want such assurance as shall allow you to think yourself safe, in any other way than that of constant, immediate, absolute dependence upon God in Christ for all you desire and expect, and so trusting, loving, and obeying him accordingly? This the word of God gives no one, because it does not assert directly concerning any individual now living, that he shall certainly be saved: neither can you obtain it by any positive certainty arising from duties or experiences, since the heart is always deceitful. But see here in the gospel such a certainty afforded, as brings the soul into a state of immediate dependence upon God, and cleaving to him alone; assuring us, that in resting on him we are safe, and nowhere else: that while we in our hearts esteem God in Christ as our only hope and portion, our everlasting interests are secure: not merely in the purpose of God, and according to the everlasting covenant, but likewise according to the open promise of the gospel. Yea, we are assured, that in knowing and obeying the gospel, the Spirit witnesses with our spirit, that we may enjoy everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.

4. The Scriptures most comfortably declare the gospel to be of such a nature, that "whosoever believes it shall be saved;" while they aver, with equal solemnity, that "he who believeth not shall be damned." So that our greatest concern lies here; lest our faith should not be the faith of God's elect; lest our hope should not be the hope of the gospel; and lest our obedience should not be the obedience of faith. Whether our faith, hope, and obedience, be of the right kind, can only be known by its being produced, supported, or influenced by the gospel. Let us then look a little closely into this matter. Every person, except one that is in despair, has some hope; and that hope of his is supported by some thoughts or sentiments in his mind and heart. Now, I say, that if the sentiment which gives a person his peace of conscience, be any thing opposite to, or separate from the gospel, as proclaiming a free and perfect Saviour, he does not

believe it ; but he has, or desires to have, a satisfaction which the gospel does not administer. Perhaps it is an enthusiastic satisfaction, formed upon a persuasion or appropriation wrought by some spirit, which speaks to him more than, or aside from what the gospel, properly understood, will warrant. Or perhaps his satisfaction is Antinomian ; such as affords him reason to fear sin less than otherwise he might see a necessity for, if he had not this hope. Whereas we must always take it for granted, if we can dare to sin, or can dare to neglect our duty, under an apprehension of the safety of our state, however obtained, or however proved, that we do not now understand the true grace of God ; for that makes all who understand it to know and feel, that it teaches them to “ deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts,” &c. The satisfaction which the gospel affords is such, that a person cannot indulge sin, without losing that satisfaction ; because, in so doing, his heart says, that not Christ, but self and sense are his hope and portion. Or perhaps a person's peace may be Pharisaical or self-righteous in some shape or other, supported by some species of self-confidence ; saying in his heart, “ I cannot be contented with a Saviour freely and openly proclaimed : I do not like to be set upon a level with the vilest of sinners, and to receive my hope and comfort upon the same plan with such : I will not stand upon the same footing with them.” Or else he will say, “ I have, or I must have something distinguishing in me, some mark, or sign, or I will not, I dare not believe and rest upon Christ.”

But after all, you may say, “ How can I be satisfied, unless I am conscious that I believe truly and savingly ; since the scriptures say, ‘ He that believeth shall not be damned ?’ Must I not then, by examination and proof, have it appear to my conscience, that I am a true believer, before I can have any well-grounded satisfaction ?”

This I find to be the grand objection, frequently made and urged against the present view of the gospel : and since it may be considered as a case of conscience, by which many are perplexed in their souls, as well as a sentimental objection, whereby many may be stumbled, I shall therefore take the more particular notice of it in the following observations.

5. If we attend then to common sense, and constant experience, as to the nature, manner, and proof of believing, or seeing, we shall find, that these things are of such a nature, that they entirely resolve themselves into their objects, so far as experience is concerned therein. A person is no farther conscious that he sees an object, than as the object seen does some way affect him: neither is a person properly conscious that he believes a proposition of importance, any farther than what he believes impresses him. When we behold an object, in common cases, our minds are not employed in thinking about the manner of our seeing, but are only led to attend to the object seen; and so in believing, we are not thinking about any exercises of our own minds therein, but only about the thing believed. So that a person comes to know that he sees or believes, not by reflection upon, or examination into any thing in himself; but by finding or experiencing, that what he sees or believes affects his mind. Thus there is produced a sort of experimental union between him that sees and believes, and what is seen or believed by him; so that he is affected with pleasure or pain, according to the light in which the thing appears, that is seen, heard, or believed. Now let us apply this plain thought to the report of the gospel.

6. The doctrine of free grace in Jesus Christ to sinners as such, proclaimed in the word, is in itself most joyful, comfortable, encouraging, and soul-pacifying news: therefore we cannot know that we believe it, but by feeling, or becoming conscious, that we are comforted, encouraged, or pacified thereby. Accordingly, the first effect of this belief must be peace of conscience before God through the blood of Christ, and some sense of the divine favour through the righteousness of Christ, proclaimed as free in the gospel. This must be, more or less, the necessary consequence, unless there remain in the mind some ignorance, doubt, or mistake, about the gospel itself; or unless the mind be drawn off to something else distinct from it or opposite to it, whereby the efficacy of the truth proclaimed may be enervated or undermined. When this appears to be the case, nothing can be more suited to remove any impediment in the way of its efficacy, than the declaring, explaining, proving, or vindic-

acting the truth, with its importance. If this method be rendered effectual by the Spirit of God, who alone can do it, then the mistake is rectified, the mind enlightened, and the doubt solved; whereupon the person is encouraged and comforted by the blessed word, on which he is caused to hope.

7. Though what the person now sees and believes be in itself a general truth, openly proclaimed, yet the effect produced in believing it, is a peculiar experience of spiritual peace, rest, and refreshment. So that while others may be supposed to remain strangers to it, or to disbelieve it, or to be under some mistake about it, he that believes it according as it is declared in the word, becomes possessed of a distinguishing experience, whereby he differs from what he was before, and from what many others are.

8. This distinguishing experience is of such a nature, that it contains or produces, more or less, an experimental consciousness of an interest in, and enjoyment of, the blessings comprehended in the declaration of free grace.

For when a person sees the Son, and believeth on him, as freely exhibited, he becomes conscious, that what he sees in Christ becomes his light; that Christ, in whom he believes, becomes his hope; that his soul is supported by that on which he trusts and leans; and that he is quickened and attracted by that glorious gospel which he believes and loves. This is the way in which all spiritual blessings come to be experienced and enjoyed by us. In this way we may arrive at satisfaction and support. And it is in vain, and unsafe for us, to desire or to seek after any other knowledge of special interest, than what arises out of, and is accompanied with, this sense and experience of a vital union and connection between our souls and Christ in a way of believing. Christ is brought so exceedingly near to us in the gospel of his grace, that he is no sooner seen and known, as there exhibited, but this peace and hope must arise in the soul more or less; otherwise, neither Christ, nor the gospel, nor the divine grace, as revealed, can be said to be quite free.

9. If a person does not become conscious, in some degree, of peace, satisfaction and support, purely from what he perceives and believes standing forth in the free declaration of

grace, he does not understand, nor does he credit the gospel; for therein is exhibited to us freely all our salvation.

Our faith can be proved only by this, That the truth itself, or which is the same, the blood and righteousness of Christ freely revealed, first pacifies the conscience before God, and then working by love, has a purifying effect upon our souls. If this kind of peace does not enter the mind, through the revelation of grace, a person will still be seeking after spiritual comfort and support separate from it, or opposite to it: so that his heart despises, or his thoughts evade the true gospel; and he is accordingly in real danger, and under some awful delusion. Where the gospel is not discerned by any person in its proper freeness, and its primitive glory, the objection now under consideration will return and continue upon his mind; and his defective and mistaken view of the gospel will still leave him under the influence of the spirit of self-dependence, as he will see no other way of obtaining or enjoying peace, but by a reflection upon something found in him, or experienced by him. Thus it appears, that the whole force of this objection proceeds at bottom from a disbelief of the proper immediate freeness of divine grace revealed in the gospel. For either a person does believe it, or he does not; if he does, he is in some measure pacified, comforted, and attracted thereby: if he does not, then he cannot see how he can have any proper peace to his mind, but by reflection upon himself; and accordingly seeks after, or rests upon some false and dangerous prop. This he is to be warned against by being reminded, that he who believes not shall be damned.

While Jesus Christ is proclaimed as a foundation so sure, that whosoever believeth shall not make haste as one in confusion; it is likewise to be added that the hail shall sweep away the refuges of lies; and such a refuge every thing is, besides the Redeemer himself. Isa. xxviii. 16, 17.

10. All the scripture exhortations and promises to believing conspire to support this view of our subject, if they are rightly understood. These gracious exhortations and promises of the word may be briefly expressed thus: *Believe, and live; look, and be saved; trust, and be safe; come, and find rest.* Now all these declarations have evidently a most

encouraging and conscience-pacifying meaning in them; for they plainly contain, to an enlightened understanding, such a refreshing import, as carries the mind at once beyond its own exercises, to the glorious, gracious object presented in them. A person apprehending the true meaning of such expressions, is not stopped in, or perplexed about the acts mentioned; but seeing that, by these calls and promises, salvation in Jesus Christ is freely presented, this sense of the divine freeness plainly suggested, becomes the life, the strength, and the hope of the soul, in all its actings towards God in Christ.

I could dwell upon this subject with abundance of pleasure, and illustrate it by various similitudes. But to be brief, let us take only one of these phrases into present consideration: "Come to me," says Christ, "and I will give you rest." Now one that is entangled with some legal thought, will immediately fix upon the act of *coming*; desiring to know *how* to perform this act aright, or to see whether he has performed it or no; thinking that he can have no peace nor rest, but from the consideration of the right performance thereof. Whereas one that is taught the proper freeness of divine grace, as thus exhibited, will fix his eye directly upon the word *me*. "Does Jesus Christ say, Come to *me*, and I will give you rest? Surely this is enough to encourage and attract my soul: I need nothing more for my hope, than to be assured of such a free welcome." With this thought his soul is pacified; and its motion towards Christ being, as I may say, excited by, and filled with a sense of this divine free love, he comes, and finds rest. We may suppose one deep in debt, and ready to be arrested, to be addressed thus, "Go to such an one, he is able and ready to pay your whole debt." Would not this testimony itself set his mind at rest directly? Yes, surely; and his act of going would not be at all considered as previously necessary to the ease of his mind, but would be found to flow from it.

CONCLUSION.

By these plain thoughts I would hope, through the blessing of the Spirit of grace, some may be led to see how much unbelief and self-righteousness must lie at the bottom of such a frame of spirit, as makes a person endeavour to perform a certain act, in order to obtain peace to his mind; or makes him examine whether he has performed it aright, in order to have peace from that consideration. For this is certainly a denial of the freeness of grace as revealed, and turns the gospel as it were into a new law, for peace and hope towards God; yea it seems evidently to proceed from some spirit of self-dependence, which will not permit a person to believe the immediate freeness of divine grace, or to be satisfied by it, or to rest in it, for want of discerning some previous change in himself for the better.

But some may here reply, with an anxious concern, "Are there not some who are true believers, who yet are not fully assured of the safety of their state in Christ." I readily answer, Yes, there are; for the least degree of true faith is connected with salvation. Yet as none can come to a clear satisfaction about themselves but in this way of believing, therefore I cannot consistently and safely take any other method of promoting the comfort of such, but by presenting before them a free and complete Saviour, to be rested upon, and rejoiced in; and if a person cannot receive comfort through such a gospel-declaration, it is both unsafe, and in vain for him to seek it any other way, in such circumstances. But if, through the operation of the blessed Spirit, by means of this gospel, his hope and comfort is promoted, the more he advances in hope and love this way, the more clearly he will be able to say with the apostle, 2 Tim. i. 12, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." While he perceives the all-sufficiency of Christ's free grace, the satisfaction of his soul is maintained by it, and he is more or less persuaded of the safety of what he has committed into Christ's hands. Here then lies the centre, the spring, the strength, of all that hope which is necessary to support and comfort our hearts.

Should any ask again, "But is there no hope to be obtained farther than that which is exhibited in the gospel to all? Can there be no room for thankfulness for distinguishing grace?" I answer, that unless we have this first hope, this beginning of confidence, for our support and strength continually, it is quite impossible that any distinguishing experience should ever be produced and maintained, or that any true evidences should appear in us. For if this be not the life and strength of the soul, namely, a free revealed Christ, the person has reason to suspect all his duties, evidences, and experiences. But if a person be comforted and quickened; if he be encouraged to trust, and constrained to love Christ hereby; he may well find reason to be abundantly thankful for distinguishing grace, crying out with holy admiration and gratitude, "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world!" John xiv. 22. Yea, while he is under this blessed influence of the gospel by the Spirit, he is taught to say with the apostle, "The life I live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. ii. 20. In this manner a believer makes use of his experiences to judge of his state; and such experiences as these, with their genuine fruits, are indeed the surest marks of our election. 1 Thess. i. 4, 5.

But instead of all this, we are too generally taught, that our consciences cannot be pacified by the blood of Christ immediately, as flowing freely to sinners; nor be truly comforted thereby. But on the contrary, almost the whole stress must be laid upon our discerning some previous gracious work; which must be made out to be saving, by the exercise of self-examination. Accordingly this duty is most commonly explained, enforced, and performed, with this view. As to that exhortation, 2 Cor. xiii. 5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: What, know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Nothing can be more evident to one who reads it with attention, and views it in its connection, than that the design of it is to intimate thus much; viz. That if any thing appears in the temper or conduct of a professor, which is disagree-

able to the gospel, he ought to take occasion from thence to suspect whether he be in the faith. But this very text plainly suggests, by the surprise couched under these words, "What, know ye not your own selves?" that if our experiences are of the right stamp, they will evidence themselves.—It is by faith that Christ dwells in the heart; and faith or believing is of such a nature, that it does more or less evidence itself to our consciences: and to confirm this witness of our own spirits, we may be sure, that the divine Spirit will not fail in joining his testimony, as we proceed loving and obeying the gospel we believe. So that there is no occasion for a laborious search, followed by a train of reasoning, to obtain peace and comfort. We need not be so suspicious of the hope of the gospel, or of the faithfulness of the Spirit as a Comforter. We may well leave this part to God, since he has proclaimed enough in the free gospel to afford us sufficient relief; and has promised that those who know, love, and obey him, shall not be forsaken by him. I remember the Psalmist once, in a disconsolate frame, was for calling to remembrance his song in the night, to obtain comfort. Psalm lxxvii. But he was unsuccessful in pursuing this method; and at length obtained comfort, by remembering the years of the right hand of the Most High: by which he meant, not his own past experiences, but the wonders God had formerly wrought for his people by Moses and Aaron. If then we would follow his example, we are to call to mind the accepted time, and the day of salvation, when Christ arose from the dead, having obtained complete salvation for them that believe.

I know you will here be ready to say, "Are all our past experiences then to be forgotten, or not improved as evidences and encouragements?" I answer, Far be it; for though they are not to be used for pacifying our consciences, &c., yet they are to be remembered as confirmations of the faith to our minds, since, if they are genuine, they are so many proofs of the truth and power of the gospel; and likewise to make it more fully appear that we are in the faith; as also to encourage a further dependence upon the same free grace and love, which was the root of all those former gracious experiences. According to what the Psalmist says,

Psalm lxiii. 7, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

Notwithstanding this, I will venture to say, that professors cannot be too suspicious of themselves, as to any experiences they have felt, or any duties they have performed. The scriptures are full of exhortations to watchfulness, jealousy, caution, and self-examination; always taking it for granted, that joy and peace come into the mind in believing and loving the testimony of God's grace in Christ. Such suspicion cannot do us any real damage; for if, in the midst of all our jealousies, the free-grace-truth in its glory and beauty appears to our view, that will prove an anchor to our hope, and an incentive to our love, even when we can find nothing about us but what would tend to discourage and sink us. And it will be found, that the comfort flowing thus into our souls from the gospel by the Spirit, as a contrast to the effects of our own self-jealousy, will be much more safe, solid, satisfying, and truly sanctifying, than what we think to obtain any other way.

Though these thoughts look as if they were intended to make believers always question their state, yet it will be found far otherwise; because they serve only to lead and keep them close to that foundation, which alone is secure, and where they will find rest. But however, in a case of so great importance, there is no room for flattery or compliment. Either you do, or do not question your state: if you do, there is no other way, that I know of, to obtain satisfaction, but by believing on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ directly as standing forth to view in the gospel; for it is in this way, and through this medium, that God conveys to his people a sense of his favour. If you do not question your state, but are well assured concerning it, then this assurance, if solid, will bear the trial: neither need you be afraid to look into the worst of it. But if a suspicion, arising in the mind upon this, should shake your confidence, it then becomes evident, that so far it was not placed upon Christ, but upon some good opinion you had formed concerning yourselves.

I shall therefore conclude the whole with one indubitable maxim, which it becomes all Christians constantly to retain; it is this: *An uncertain foundation is an unsafe foundation.*

However then Christians are of the number of the elect, redeemed and adopted; however they may, or ought to be esteemed such, by themselves or others, agreeable to their profession, practice, or experience; and however it be their duty to be thankful for any experiences or comforts which they have felt; all which is readily allowed: yet there is no absolute certainty to be gathered upon this plan, by reason of the deceitfulness of the heart. From whence it is plain, that God never intended his people should take their rest herein; but that they should, in the midst of all their hopes and fears about their personal interest, be led, confined, and kept to that hope and refuge that is in itself safe and sure. Nothing is more necessary than this, nor is there any thing that we are naturally more averse to. Some make the world their portion, others make criminal indulgences their delight; and many make their own righteousness, in some shape or other, their confidence: and shall I add, that some are for placing it upon their experiences, and upon what they call the work of the Spirit in their hearts; and upon any thing, rather than on the freeness of gospel-grace, which the work of the Spirit is designed to lead us to.

But if we are led and taught by the Holy Spirit to rest directly upon Christ alone, then we have the anchor of our souls both sure and steadfast: then the superstructure of gospel experience and obedience, built upon this foundation, will be good and solid; receiving all its solidity and firmness from its immediate connection with the foundation whereon it is built. Neither can we attain to any steady hope concerning our own interest, but in working upon this plan, and resting upon this prop. If a person looks upon the hope held forth in the gospel to be only an uncertain conditional hope, apprehending he may not securely rest upon it, unless through the consciousness of something previously wrought in him, or done by him, he is of course induced to seek after, or look to something in himself, for the reason, or immediate ground of his confidence before God; and while this sentiment prevails in his heart, every duty he performs is legalized, and every experience he may have felt is perverted, by being placed exactly in the room of a revealed Christ. But if, on the contrary, the person sees that God's love in Christ,

as revealed in the free gospel, points directly towards him for his only foundation, then the more he is apprehensive of his own guilt and danger, the more he is obliged to trust in Christ, and constrained to love him : and so the gospel-hope becomes a spur to all cheerful obedience. The believer then does not take his comfort *from* his obedience ; but taking it immediately from Christ, he enjoys comfort *in* the exercise of love and obedience. For every exercise of evangelical love, and every act of gospel-obedience, has some comfort attending it ; while every departure from Christ produces darkness and distress, unless the soul be deluded and deceived by some false comfort. Thus, upon the whole, it appears, that if the Lord the Spirit gives us right views of the full free grace held forth in the gospel, we shall be thereby kept at a distance from the self-righteous hope of the Pharisee, the licentious hope of the Antinomian, the self-sufficient hope of the free-willer, the conditional hope of the Neonomian, the presumptuous hope of him who is confident of his own interest without sufficient evidence for it ; and we shall be prevented from taking up with the uncertain hope of him who does, more or less, place his evidences or experiences in the room of Christ, for his immediate and chief reason of encouragement and confidence. Then we shall have joy and peace in believing ; and abound in hope, and in holiness, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE
LEADING DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL
STATED AND DEFENDED.

BY JOHN SNODGRASS, D.D.

PREFATORY NOTICE.

DOCTOR JOHN SNODGRASS was born of respectable parents in Paisley, August 8th, 1740. Intended originally for a mercantile life, his strong literary tendencies and his serious disposition induced his parents to change their purpose, and give him an education which might qualify him for the Christian ministry. Having finished the ordinary course of literary, philosophical, and theological study at the university of Glasgow, he was, in 1766, by the presbytery of Paisley, licensed to preach the gospel. Soon after his license he for some time became assistant to the Rev. James Stirling, the predecessor of Dr. Balfour in the Outer High Church of Glasgow, and afterwards officiated as a probationer in a small chapel at Thornhill. In 1774 he was ordained one of the ministers of Dundee. After seven years of very acceptable ministry there, he was translated to his native town. On December 19th, 1781, he was inducted to the charge of the Middle Church, and on the same day his friend, Mr. Colin Gillies, son of Dr. John Gillies, of the College church, Glasgow, was inducted to the charge of the Laigh Church. In the year 1785, through the instrumentality of Dr. Witherspoon, who at an early period had formed a favourable opinion of his talents and character, he received the honorary degree of D.D. from the college of New Jersey, of which at that time his venerable friend was president. On the 28th May, 1794, he preached the very able discourse forming the subsequent Tract, before "The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge," which was printed in the following year. In April, 1796, he took an active part in the formation of the Paisley Missionary Society, auxiliary to "The Missionary Society" formed in London in May 1795. He wrote an eloquent and impressive circular letter recommending the institution to public attention and

support, and on the 19th of June following he preached in the High Church before the directors at their first annual meeting. This sermon, on "The Prospects of Divine Providence respecting the Conversion of the World to Christ," with a valuable historical appendix, was afterwards published. On the 22d of September in that year he was rendered incapable of public ministerial work by paralysis. From this he so far recovered as to make the attempt on a week day to resume his much loved employment; but the effect was only to convince himself and his friends, that henceforth he must take his place among those ministers of God who really serve though they "only stand and wait." He had not long to wait—his expressed desire not to outlive his usefulness was granted. In the beginning of the summer of 1797 he was removed to the sea-coast, and for a day or two seemed to gain an increase of strength and spirits; but on the 21st June, when walking in the fields with his wife and children, he sustained another and a severe attack from the disease under which he was labouring. On reaching his lodgings with difficulty, he expressed his gratitude to God that Mrs. Snodgrass had been with him when so suddenly struck down, and was laid on the bed from which he was to rise no more. From the nature of the disease, he could speak but little and inarticulately; but he so retained the possession of his mind as to express his confidence in the great Redeemer, and repeatedly said to those around his death-bed, "All is well." He died on the morning of next day, being June 22d, 1797. He was buried on the 27th; and on the Lord's day following, being July 1st, his death was improved to his sorrowing congregation by his intimate friend, the Rev. Dr. Balfour of Glasgow, who so long occupied so high a place as an eloquent preacher and good minister of Jesus Christ. In the account he gave of his departed friend, he stated that "his natural powers were great, his sense strong and manly, his genius fertile, his application to every useful study intense and successful, and his knowledge of men and books in every branch of literature uncommonly extensive. Furnished with real erudition, and fitted to make a figure in the learned world, his highest and unceasing ambition was to grow in and to communicate sacred scriptural knowledge. He excelled in Biblical learning and sacred criticism. These enabled him often to throw light on dark and difficult passages, and to strike the attentive hearer with ingenious remark

and illustration. With critical disquisition, however, he always mingled sound doctrine; solid practical instruction, and deeply impressive address. All his views in preaching centred in Christ and the salvation that is in him. To secure faith, and affection, obedience, and submission, he set forth and recommended the Saviour of sinners, not only by the highest perfection of human character but with all the attributes of true and proper divinity; with all the merit and grace of the only appointed and accepted High Priest over the house of God; with all the supreme majesty of the King of Zion; and the almighty grace of the author of eternal salvation. Though a zealous and steady friend of lawful authority and good order, he was warmly attached to the principles of civil and religious liberty, and abhorred every encroachment on them. Able to fill any station in the church with personal credit and public honour, he never sought great things for himself. While others of much inferior talents pressed forward to hold the pre-eminence, he delighted in the enjoyment of the shade. 'To improve his own mind in private, and to be useful to his people in public, seemed to be the height of his ambition.'—In 1799, two years after Dr. Snodgrass' death, an 8vo volume of more than 600 pages was issued from the Paisley press, entitled "A Commentary, with Notes, on part of the Book of the Revelation of John, by the late John Snodgrass, D.D., minister of the Middle church of Paisley." It is quite fragmentary, and though containing indications of superior talents in the author, is by no means such a work as he would have chosen to give to the world. His two published sermons, especially that included in this volume, are of such a character as to induce a feeling of regret that one so gifted should not have left more abundant memorials of his superior endowments and acquirements.—For the facts in this short notice I am indebted to notes from the Minute-book of the Presbytery of Paisley, kindly communicated to me by their clerk, the Rev. Mr. Makellar of Mearns, and to "A Memoir of the Life and Character of the Rev. John Findlay, D.D., minister of the High church of Paisley, with an Appendix and Biographical Notes by Thomas Crichton, master of the Hospital, Paisley." Paisley, 1821;—furnished me by my esteemed friend, Principal Lee.

THE
LEADING DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL
STATED AND DEFENDED.

ROMANS i. 16.—“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.”

WHEN mankind at large were about to be favoured with a revelation from heaven, in which their everlasting interests were most deeply concerned, nothing could appear, at first sight, more natural than to suppose that the truths which it contained should be level to every capacity;—that they should be entirely accommodated to human modes of conception;—that every thing offensive to human prejudices should be softened, if not concealed;—and that both its doctrines and its laws should be represented in the most inviting form, so as to recommend them at once to the understanding and to the heart. It could not, surely, have been imagined, that this revelation would contain any thing mysterious or incomprehensible. Far less could it be supposed, that it should wear such an unfavourable aspect in the eye of the world, as to make it either necessary or proper, for any of those by whom it was published, to assert, that “he was not ashamed of it.”

The fact, however, is directly contrary to what we should have expected. The gospel undoubtedly contains doctrines which are mysterious and incomprehensible in their very nature. Even that leading article, on the belief of which the salvation of men is suspended, that “Jesus is the Son of God,” possesses this character in a high degree. But the

very idea of a crucified Saviour is so repugnant to the natural sentiments of the human mind, and so apparently incredible in the judgment of this world, that perhaps nothing that could be proposed, was more fitted to excite general aversion and contempt. "Physician, heal thyself," was a proverb well understood and easy to be applied. And the insulting language of his enemies at his crucifixion, "He saved others, himself he cannot save," proceeds upon the same original judgment.

The treatment which this doctrine met with perfectly accords with what has now been asserted. For, notwithstanding the resurrection of the Lord, and all the wonderful events with which it was followed, yet the offence of the cross was not removed. It still continued "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." The preaching of this doctrine was styled "the foolishness of preaching;" and those who espoused it were "everywhere spoken against."

But these circumstances, however discouraging, seem only to have stimulated the great apostle of the Gentiles in the discharge of his arduous office. He had, when he wrote these words, already preached the gospel through a wide extent of country; from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum. He had often purposed to visit Rome, that he might impart to the Christians there some extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost: no apostle, it appears, having as yet been among them. Hitherto, however, he had been prevented from executing his design. But this was owing to certain necessary causes, and not to any carelessness on his part; far less to his being unwilling to hazard his reputation, in preaching the despised doctrines of the gospel even in that celebrated seat of learning and politeness. For he tells them with a bold and manly spirit, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise; so, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

It is scarcely to be doubted, that many who are called Christians think very differently from the apostle upon this

point. They cannot conceive that the doctrines which Christianity has been generally supposed to teach, can ever be reconciled to any principles of reason or probability. This, however, is nothing new or unexampled. The truth is, that the gospel has had inveterate prejudices to combat, both from the understanding and from the passions of men; and therefore, it is no great wonder that it should have met with much opposition in the world; as in fact has been the case, in every age, and in every country, where it has been preached.

It must, therefore, be of importance, to vindicate the scheme of religion and salvation to men, which it discloses, in opposition to these prejudices; and particularly, if it can be done, to show that it contains nothing which, even in the eye of sober reason itself, there is any cause to be ashamed of.

This I shall attempt, at least with respect to several of its essential and distinguishing doctrines, in the following discourse. After which, I shall endeavour to show, that the effect which it produces upon all who cordially receive it, is so divinely great and excellent, that, instead of being ashamed of it, there is the highest reason to glory in it.

First of all, however, it will be necessary to inquire, what are the essential and leading doctrines which the gospel contains. For these, it is evident, we must have recourse to the sacred record alone. But let it be observed, that this inestimable record was not left as a deposit to which only the learned and the speculative could have access. It was intended equally for the use and benefit of the poor, "that their faith might not stand in the wisdom of man;" and consequently, it must be accommodated, in all its essential articles, to their situation and capacities.

This therefore, I lay down as a principle, which, one should think, could scarcely be disputed. Upon the contrary supposition, how deplorable the situation to which the great bulk of mankind must be reduced! The right of private judgment, that inestimable privilege which every reasonable creature so justly claims, can be of little benefit to them, if they must depend upon the determinations of men of superior endowments even for the knowledge of "the words of eternal life." If they cannot clearly discern, from the face of the revelation

itself, what are the leading characters of that scheme of doctrine which it unfolds, how shall they be able to decide upon the various opinions which may be formed respecting it? How easy is it for the sophistry of human reasonings, especially when embellished with the fascinating charms of eloquence, to throw an air of plausibility upon the most visionary schemes, the fallacy of which it will be impossible for them to detect? If then a principle of this kind should be maintained, it would as effectually be "locking up the father's will in a strong box," as what was done by the policy of the Roman pontiff himself. For if the people cannot exercise their judgment, even upon the great essential doctrines of salvation, but through the medium of learned and ingenious disquisition, it is of little consequence whether they be under the influence of the fancy of philosophy, or the cunning of priestcraft. The question, therefore, is not, In what manner this sacred record may be interpreted by men of extraordinary ability and learning? But, What is the easy and natural meaning in which it would be understood by a plain simple inquirer, who should give himself up implicitly to the instructions which it contains.*

In order to place this matter in a just and proper light, I will take the liberty to introduce a short memoir of a humble searcher after truth, in one of those distant parts of the world, where the beams of the Sun of Righteousness have never shone, but where some original ideas derived from early tradition are still to be found. Long had he felt the deficiency of nature's light. Much had he wished to be more perfectly instructed. At length, by the dispositions of providence,

* I hope none will so far misunderstand me as to suppose that I am pleading against the necessity of talents and learning to the study of the Scripture. On the contrary, I am convinced, that, perhaps, no study requires a greater variety of accomplishments. Of this there cannot be a stronger proof than that, notwithstanding the labours of ages, in which men of the best qualifications, both natural and acquired, have been engaged, many obscurities and difficulties in the sacred volume are still unremoved; many passages seem not to have received a just or adequate interpretation, and many more continue evidently despoiled of their native elegance and beauty. I only contend, that all the essential doctrines of Scripture are delivered in so plain a manner that he that runs may read them.

he became acquainted with this precious record. He understood that it contained a revelation from the Father of the universe. He learned that it discovered a wonderful plan for regenerating the human character; for delivering men from their distresses, and making them happy for ever. Therefore, with the most sincere and honest anxiety he applies to study it.—Let us follow him a little in his important research.

What is the first discovery in the order of this plan that opens to his view? It is a melancholy one indeed: but he cannot resist its evidence, unless he will shut his eyes from beholding it. It is this: that man is degraded and ruined by sin;—that the vengeance of heaven is hanging over his head;—and that without a sovereign remedy, beyond the power of creation to produce, he must inevitably perish. He feels his situation; conscience bears testimony to the truth; his anxieties are increased, and his inquiries quickened.

He next perceives a truth which at once astonishes and gladdens his heart: that there is an almighty Deliverer provided for man, who is distinguished by the appellation of the Son of God; that he possesses divine perfection and glory, and is the object of divine homage; that this wonderful person became a man; that he was born; that he lived in this world; that he laboured, and that he suffered, and that he died: that by his death he made atonement for our guilt; that by the infinite value of his sacrifice and of his service he obtained a glorious happiness for all his saints; and that he is now gone into the heavens to prepare it for them.

In the progress of his research, he becomes acquainted with another divine person, who is called the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ. By his almighty energy, he learns, that the souls of men are quickened; that their understandings are illuminated; that their affections are purified, and elevated to heavenly objects; and that they are at length made fit inhabitants of that happy world. Finally, he learns, that God dispenses these inestimable benefits according to his sovereign good pleasure, and claims the right of “doing what he will with his own.” He comes away astonished at the doctrines he had been taught; but without a single doubt

upon his mind that these doctrines are certainly declared in this book of God.

Do you ask to whom this history particularly refers? I answer, It is the history of every man, who comes to the New Testament with an earnest desire to know and to receive the truth which it reveals. Indeed how can it be otherwise? The doctrines we have been reciting are there written in the clearest and most determinate expressions; so that the common meaning of language must be entirely altered before it is possible to get quit of them.

Notwithstanding this, I know it has been a frequent practice of late, to endeavour to bring down Christianity almost to the same level with what is called natural religion, (a thing that has never yet been defined,) by denying that there are any such doctrines contained in it. In this way, it is imagined the prejudices of unbelievers may be best removed, and its credit effectually established in the world. But the event which has happened here is such as might reasonably have been expected. For the nearer Christianity is brought to natural religion, its importance will be the more diminished; till at length there will appear to be little occasion or need for it at all. But when one considers what violence must be done to the sacred writings before these doctrines can be expunged from them, is it not fitted to create in the minds of unbelievers no very favourable suspicion concerning them, when even in the judgment of those who defend them, their plain and obvious meaning must be rejected, and they must be turned and wrested in so strange a manner, to make them speak the words of truth and soberness. Nothing is more injurious to Christianity than this mistaken zeal to promote its interest. It increases instead of lessening the prejudices of unbelievers. And with respect to the faithful, it is a most useless labour, as it is an attempt to defend the external revelation at the expense of the doctrines which it contains: on account of which, alone, it is valuable and excellent in their esteem.

But, indeed, scarcely any thing can be more preposterous, than to attempt to eradicate these doctrines from the sacred volume, which it bears so evidently on its very front. It is one of those high absurdities which nothing but the all-famil-

iarizing power of custom prevents us from perceiving. Was the gospel really intended for the use of the people at large? and can we suppose it delivered in such a manner that not one of a thousand can understand its real meaning? But, was it necessary that it should speak in a peculiar phraseology, that the people of that age might be able to understand it? and can we suppose that no adequate provision should be made for those of future ages to prevent them from misapprehending it? Or rather, is it not most unreasonable to imagine, that, for the sake of a handful of Jewish converts, this divine revelation should be set forth, with such a constant reference to their history, and opinions, and circumstances, and ceremonies, that neither the Gentiles of that age, nor of any future age of the world, should be able to understand it?

What a strange figure would a professed teacher of Christianity make, were he to carry this sacred record to one of those distant parts of the world to which we have been alluding, and endeavour to propagate from it a religion so contrary to what it apparently teaches!—In consistency with the testimony which it bears of itself, he must put it into the hands of the people, as intended for their use. He must desire them carefully to read and to ponder it; and he must be candid enough to inform them, that it is his sole authority for the doctrines in which he is come to instruct them. It makes little difference which of its great and leading doctrines we suppose to occupy their attention. We shall therefore at present consider him, as instructing them in the doctrine of our Lord's person and character, upon which the whole scheme of our redemption hangs. Let us listen for a moment to what passes between them.

He informs them, that he was a prophet mighty in word and deed, whom God had commissioned to direct mankind in the way to happiness;—that there was something very extraordinary and admirable in his character:—that, notwithstanding, there is little reason to believe that he was more than human; but, at any rate, they must beware of considering him as God, because there can be no God but one.

How then does it happen, says one of that untutored people, that he is represented as God in this sacred record?

There I find he is not only called God in a variety of places, but he is called "the great God;" and described as "over all God blessed for evermore."

Why, says the enlightened teacher, these are to be understood only as magnificent titles, expressive of his delegated authority and miraculous endowments.

But, replies the other, I find those qualities, by which God is distinguished from every creature, ascribed to him; and I see him held forth as the object of worship both to angels and men.

But do not you hear him telling you likewise, that his Father is greater than he?

Undoubtedly I do. But this can occasion no great difficulty. For, as he is represented both in the character of God and man, he speaks of himself sometimes in the one character and sometimes in the other. Besides, he sustains an official character as Mediator; by which this seeming difficulty may be aptly resolved.

But still, continues the rational and philosophic divine, you must not interpret the Scripture in any sense which is unreasonable.

Well, then, replies the astonished catechumen, when I read, in this infallible record, that the Saviour is God, and the great God; it seems I must believe *that he is not God!*—when I see the perfections of God ascribed to him, I must believe *that there is no proper deity belonging to him!*—and when I behold him receiving the adoration both of angels and of saints, I must believe *that it is idolatry for me to worship him!* Tell me now, I beseech you, which of these is the most *unreasonable* interpretation.—

The same absurdity will be found to adhere to every attempt to explain away any of the other leading doctrines which the gospel contains.

Let us now endeavour to vindicate these doctrines from the misrepresentations which they have suffered; and to show that, notwithstanding all that severity of censure which has been passed upon them, and notwithstanding all that contempt and derision in which they have been frequently held, —there is nothing in their character which, even in the eye of sober reason itself, there is any cause to be ashamed of.

I might here safely rest the whole of their defence upon this general ground,—that it is a dictate of the highest reason, to receive whatever we know of a truth that God has revealed for our instruction and benefit. This is one of those unquestionable maxims which can scarcely admit either of illustration or proof; and yet it carries something along with it so mortifying to human pride, that it is the most difficult thing in the world to persuade men to reduce it to practice. Hence it is that we find them going on in direct opposition to it every day, and running into the most flat and palpable absurdity. What can be more presumptuous, than to bring the schemes of infinite and unsearchable Wisdom to the test of human ignorance and weakness? What can be more preposterous and arrogant, than for that very reason, which confessedly stands in need of a divine instructor to enlighten it, to sit as sovereign judge upon the propriety of the instructions which he delivers; and, in opposition to his plainest declarations, to pronounce that these things cannot be so? With infinitely greater decorum would the most unenlightened peasant reprobate the inventions of an Archimedes as impracticable, or the discoveries of a Newton as incredible, because he could not understand them; and indeed, in some instances, they ran contrary to the evidence of his very senses.

Let candour then acknowledge, what it is impossible to deny, that it is unreasonable in the extreme to reject the plain and obvious meaning of revelation, either because we cannot comprehend it, or because we are unable to reconcile it with some other principles which must of necessity be held.

But perhaps it may be proper to go more fully into the subject than can be done upon any general ground. I begin then with observing, what is strong to our purpose, that several of the important doctrines which the gospel teaches are of such a nature, that they will be found to remain after all the endeavours that can be used to get rid of them. This, if I mistake not, is the case with the doctrine of original sin, as it is commonly called; and likewise with some other doctrines, which I shall have occasion to take notice of. And if this can be clearly proved, we have surely no reason to be ashamed of the religion which we profess, because it teaches us that the state and nature of things are what they are.

With respect to the doctrine of original sin, perhaps it is not sufficiently considered, that to deny that mankind are in a guilty and ruined state, is to subvert the very design of the gospel; as it makes Christ to come upon a mistaken and useless errand, namely to save a world which was not lost: and to admit this general guilt and ruin, is in effect to acknowledge the very doctrine which is now in question. Besides, have we not the clearest evidence, from the uniform conduct of Providence every day, that human creatures are treated as guilty, even in their infant state, and before they can have done any thing personally to occasion it, by being subjected to death, and all those exerceiating agonies by which it is often preceded?—Nothing can be more feeble than the attempt to explain this away, by insisting that it is not necessarily connected with guilt or demerit in the sufferers; as the same God who bestows life has undoubtedly a right to take it away when and in what manner he pleases.* For, is it not one of the plainest declarations of the word of God, that death is the wages of sin? Every circumstance that is mentioned respecting it confirms this declaration. By sin it was introduced into the world. It was threatened beforehand as the punishment of sin; and it has been inflicted, under this idea, in every period from the fall of Adam to the present time.

When death, therefore, is carrying on its ravages without exception or reserve, it is not merely as suffering, but as penal suffering, that we are constrained to view it. And that man must reason in a very singular manner, indeed, who should choose to maintain, that though God has been inflict-

* I ought here to have excepted the apology which is made for this part of the divine conduct by a late celebrated advocate for the integrity and innocence of human nature as it comes into the world; because, while it possesses a still worse quality, it is the weakest that can be imagined. He seems to be sensible, that it is not consistent with perfect equity that sufferings and death should be inflicted upon innocent creatures. But he observes, "that the Lord of all beings can never want time and place and power abundantly to compensate their sufferings," [see Dr. Taylor on Original Sin]:—not considering, that the very idea of a compensation being necessary proceeds upon the supposition of injustice; and that God can no more be unjust for a single moment than he can be unjust for ever.

ing this punishment, from age to age, upon vast multitudes of the human species, who have never sinned in their own persons; yet this is no sufficient or satisfying evidence that they are treated as guilty in being subjected to it.

But what deserves our particular attention is, that the other part of this doctrine, the corruption of our nature, is itself a matter of fact which can scarcely be disputed; and therefore it must be accounted for equally upon every scheme. Every production of the divine Worker must be absolutely perfect as it comes from his hand. The question, therefore, is shortly this:—Whether it be most reasonable to suppose, that this corruption in which we are involved, and all the misery which is consequent upon it, have befallen us on account of a transgression which some way or other is charged upon us; or for no cause or reason that can be assigned at all?

But still, perhaps, it will not be allowed that there is any original or native corruption in the human breast. Perhaps it will be said, that the corrupt tendency which appears in every person as soon as he may be denominated a moral agent, is the effect of the evil example alone under which he was formerly educated. This, however, is only removing one difficulty by introducing another. For it will be found as hard to reconcile it with the equity of the divine government, that human creatures should be placed in circumstances in which they shall all be infallibly perverted by the time that they are capable of distinguishing between good and evil; as that the different parts of their constitution should be unequally balanced, and consequently, that they should possess the evil bias when they come into the world.

The Scripture doctrine, therefore, of original sin, is so far from being absurd or unreasonable, that it goes a greater length in accounting for appearances than any other principle that has yet been discovered. The ancient moralists acknowledged the fact; but were unable to explain it. Whence cometh evil? was the question to which none of them could give a satisfying answer. But the Scripture leads us to the true solution of this puzzling problem. It informs us, that human nature, which then only existed in the persons of our first parents, fell from its integrity, when it was put to the trial in

its most perfect state : a trial not only most equitable and fair, but likewise so apparently easy, that no person whatever, had he been then present, could have hesitated a moment in resting his future fortunes upon it. This, therefore, ought to be considered, not as the trial of one man, or of one pair only, but of the whole species ; all the individuals of which seem to be much more the same in the divine constitution than we at present can easily conceive of. And accordingly we find, that the taint which human nature received in the original transgression has universally overrun it ; and has become like “the little leaven which leavened the whole lump.”

To go over all the evidence for this doctrine, and to answer all the objections, many of them idle enough, which have been brought against it, would require a volume. I only meant to take it up under one particular aspect, in order to impress the mind with the insignificance and folly of endeavouring to prevent Christianity from asserting as a principle, what we see founded in nature and existing in fact.

It were no difficult matter to show, that something of the same character belongs even to the mysterious doctrine of the decrees of God. It will readily be supposed that this doctrine is as far removed from experience as any that was ever the subject of human speculation ; and yet, strange as it may appear, I doubt not that a penetrating eye will, in some of the most important instances, discover the decree lurking in the event which is connected with it. At present I shall only spend an observation or two upon this particular point, before we go on to the other doctrines which remain chiefly to be considered.

I am aware that this is a doctrine so very offensive to the carnal reasonings of the mind of man, that every possible endeavour has been used to explain it away. By some it is denied that there are any particular decrees at all ; an opinion so apparently inconsistent with the divine perfection, that it does not merit a serious confutation. By others it is maintained, that the decrees are not absolute, but conditional ; and that they proceed upon foreseen faith and obedience in those who are the objects of the divine favour. It is, however, generally allowed, that God foresaw from eternity every future event ; none professedly denying it, except

those who believe so very little of Christianity that they scarcely deserve to be reckoned among its votaries. And this foreknowledge, if it be attentively considered, will be found, as to all the effects and consequences of it, to be the very same thing with a decree. For no person, I suppose, will have the boldness to affirm, that the foreseen incredulity of a sinner could not be prevented or overcome even by the power of almighty grace itself. And accordingly, some of the most candid and able defenders of the last mentioned opinion, when pushed to the uttermost, and asked, Why this foreseen incredulity was not prevented, and the sinner saved from destruction? have been obliged simply to resolve it into the sovereignty of the divine counsels, and to say with the Scripture, "because it so pleased God."

This every one must perceive is giving up the point. But how is it possible consistently to maintain it? Will it be laid down as a principle, that it was the ultimate design of God, that every individual of the human race should be saved? How then can we conceive that his design should be frustrated? But will it be said, that he carries on this design by communicating only such a measure of grace as might be sufficient for the salvation of all men? To superficial inquirers this will be a plausible salvo. But did he not foresee that this measure of grace would be effectual in some, but not in all? How then can we suppose him carrying on this great benevolent design, upon a plan by which he certainly knew it would never be accomplished? We must therefore, in all consistency, relinquish the principle that has been now laid down. And, unless we choose to be so absurd as to reject the doctrine altogether, this will oblige us to take up with that absolute and sovereign election which the Scripture teaches; and of which, what it is impossible to doubt of as matter of fact, the final destruction of those who are not the objects of it, is a confirming proof.

I am not unacquainted with the difficulties which arise upon such a subject;—difficulties which will recur upon us, in some degree, upon every scheme that can be adopted. It is indeed a subject on which it becomes us both to speak and to think with deep humility and self-diffidence, as what is beyond the power of any mortal, and probably of any

created being, to comprehend. But if we would regulate our judgments by the dictates of revealed truth, we should find these difficulties greatly diminished. The chief of them relates to that impenetrable mystery, the introduction of sin under the administration of an all-perfect Being. But this is a point upon which, I conceive, we are not permitted to speculate. The Scripture never leads our views, upon this subject, beyond the apostacy and fall of man. The decree always considers man as a guilty and perishing creature. And, when this fact is once admitted, it will go far to enable us to vindicate the divine procedure; as it is a righteous thing with God to suffer the wicked to go on in their evil courses; while his mercy is displayed in snatching whom he pleases as brands from the burning, and making them the trophies of his victorious grace.*

* It is curious to observe the weakness and folly of human invention, when applied to correct or improve the schemes of God. This is really the light in which it is often to be viewed; although it is not to be expected that men will acknowledge it; and indeed it ought in candour to be supposed that they themselves are not sensible of it. They set out with an opinion, that what the Scripture appears to declare, in several instances, cannot be true, because it leads to inconsistency and contradiction. Therefore they form measures of conduct for the divine Being more simple and probable, which they scruple not to lay down as the scheme which he has pursued. This folly is nowhere more manifest than with respect to the subject which we are now treating. When they have explained away the doctrine which the gospel teaches, and substituted their own invention in its room; have they made the matter more clear and consistent than it was before?—have they found out a scheme more worthy of God, as they often speak, or more effectual to the purpose which he may be supposed to have had in view?—Let us examine the fictions which their imaginations have suggested.

To maintain that there are no particular decrees at all, involves the very unseemly conclusion, that God has formed a world, and has left all the events which should take place in it, at least so far as human actions are concerned, uncertain and desultory, to be determined in any way whatever as chance may direct them. Besides, in order to give this scheme the appearance of consistency, it is found necessary to deny that the foreknowledge of God extends to human actions: from which it unavoidably follows that the great design of God in saving sinners from destruction, by being suspended upon the caprice of the human will, might be entirely defeated. What can be more dishonouring to the divine Perfection than this? What more degrading to the infinite wisdom of God, than to suppose

Let us now turn our attention to those very momentous doctrines in which the method of our salvation is unfolded: and which therefore require a more particular examination. Were we to take them up in their full extent, it is easy to perceive that it would be impossible to do any justice to them within the bounds of a single discourse. I shall, there-

him laying down a plan, of which, by the very supposition, it is impossible for him to ensure the success, and of which, indeed, he cannot perceive the issue? How can it ever be reconciled to the principles of inviolable integrity and truth, that He should deliver a vast variety of predictions, of events depending upon the will of man, and make us firmly to expect their accomplishment, when at best they can be no more than probable conjectures; such events, according to them, being absolutely uncertain till they actually take place?

On the other hand, to maintain the doctrine of particular decrees, not absolute, but conditional, and proceeding upon foreseen faith and obedience, or the want of them, leads to evident absurdity and contradiction. It supposes God certainly to foresee the future determinations of the human mind, although these are held to be really contingent and uncertain. It agrees with the former scheme in this contingency and uncertainty of human actions, in order to make it consistent with God's design of saving all men; and yet it determines the character and state of every particular person as unalterably as the doctrine of absolute decrees does. For, as no truth can be more evident, than that what is certainly foreseen must certainly happen; the decree passing upon this certain foreknowledge makes the whole matter as fixed and necessary as any thing that can be conceived. Every objection, then, that can be brought against the doctrine of absolute decrees, from the inefficacy of all arguments and motives upon the non-elected, may be turned against this scheme with undiminished force: for those, who are certainly foreseen to resist all the means that shall be used for their salvation, cannot be prevailed upon or overcome by any. Every measure, then, that can be taken to reclaim them, must be as fruitless upon the one scheme as upon the other: while this last possesses the high absurdity, of representing God as labouring to accomplish the salvation of those very persons by means which he knew in fact would be inadequate to the design.—I say nothing at present upon a middle scheme for solving the difficulties upon this mysterious subject, though adopted by a Watts, and commended by the descriptive powers of a Milton; because, while it does little to obviate the above-mentioned objections, it induces additional ones. I have indeed already observed, that it is no sufficient reason for rejecting a doctrine of revelation, that it is attended with insuperable difficulties in our manner of conceiving it: but it is certainly a poor recommendation of any scheme, when, in order to escape these difficulties, it turns aside from the Scripture truth, and falls into greater.

fore, select the two following as the subject of our present inquiry; which are of principal importance, and which indeed in some measure include the rest.

I. That the atoning sacrifice, and meritorious obedience of Christ are the only grounds upon which we can obtain pardon of sin, and acceptance with God unto eternal life.

II. That it is only by the all-powerful energy of the Holy Spirit upon the soul, that we can be renewed and sanctified after the image of God.

I. There is no article of our Christian faith which comes more closely home to the deepest interests and feelings of the human heart, than that of our reconciliation and acceptance with God in virtue of the death and righteousness of Christ, as it has just now been stated. What intimation can be more animating and joyful than that "through this man is preached to us the forgiveness of sins?" Acts xiii. 38. What history can be more affecting than the simple narrative, —that "he bare our sins on his own body upon the tree," 1 Pet. ii. 24;—that "he gave himself a ransom for all," 1 Tim. ii. 6;—and that "he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him?" 2 Cor. v. 21. This is that inestimable doctrine which is the wonder and glory of the gospel. The early Christians exulted in it as the strong foundation of all their hopes. And one should think, that if ever there was a truth fitted to command the highest admiration, and the most transporting gratitude, it must be this.

Blessed be God, it is likewise a truth for which we have the fullest evidence in the sacred volume. This was necessary to quiet the anxieties of conscious guilt; and to give us that peace with God, which it was the gracious design of the gospel to impart. Accordingly, it is there set forth, in a great variety of places, in the most express and determinate language. There our Lord is not only represented as having expiated sin by his death; but we are informed of the very manner in which this expiation was made:—That he was substituted in the room of the guilty;—that he suffered the punishment which their sins deserved;—that, in this way, he made ample satisfaction to the justice of his Father;—and, as his giving himself to death was likewise the highest act of

obedience to his Father's will, he thereby procured, not only pardon, but acceptance and blessedness for all his saints. What other proper or natural sense can be put, either upon the passages already recited, or upon the following affecting declarations: that "Christ gave himself for our sins," Gal. i. 4;—that "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;"—that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed," Isa. liii. 5;—that "he once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh," 1 Pet. iii. 18;—that "he was made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13;—and that "he hath redeemed us to God by his blood," Rev. v. 9. Is it in the power of language to convey more clearly the idea of vicarious suffering, or suffering in the room and for the benefit of others, than is here expressed?

But, as it was necessary that a matter of such vast importance to the encouragement and comfort of the sinner should be not only clearly but early notified, without which indeed he would be in danger of sinking into despair; we behold the attention and tenderness of God towards man, displayed in the institution of sacrifices immediately after the fatal period of the original apostacy, which was both wonderfully fitted to bring him to the knowledge of this most interesting doctrine, and to penetrate his soul with the affecting discoveries which it contains.* From the account of the cere-

* I have here taken it for granted that the institution of sacrifice was divine: being persuaded, that, were not the mind of man disposed to call in question almost every thing that comes before it, it could scarcely be disputed. We find sacrifices in practice within a short period of the fall of man, and have reason to conclude that their commencement is to be dated from that fatal event, as the only method of access by which he could then draw near unto God. We see God from the beginning expressing his approbation of that mode of worship. We see it continued with acceptance through the whole of the patriarchal ages: and when he was giving laws to a people, whom he had separated for himself, he made sacrifices such an essential and necessary part of their worship, that without these they could have no access into his gracious presence. What a presumption is this that they derived their origin from his divine authority alone! Indeed the contrary supposition carries the strongest marks of incredibility along with it. As man could not discover the grand mysterious

monial with which offerings of this kind were afterwards accompanied, and which, it is probable, in all its essential formalities had been originally enjoined,—the idea of a substitution must be manifest to every intelligent and impartial reader. What can more significantly denote it than this necessary rite, that the hands of the offerer should be laid upon the head of the sacrifice before it was slain? This was, as it were, laying the guilt upon the devoted victim, which was immediately to suffer to make atonement for it: and the leading aim of the whole was to give a symbolical representation, and an anticipating prospect, of the manner in which sin was to be borne by an infinitely greater sacrifice which was to be offered for it.

As this mysterious institution, then, ministered the most important information to the ancients, it is a confirming evidence of the truth even to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come. We see that the method of saving sinners from destruction in every age has been the same. Our conceptions of the great sacrifice itself, receive a friendly aid from the reflection of that light by which *they* were led forward to behold it; and we can enter more fully into the meaning of those scriptures where it is said, that “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;”—that “the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all;”—and that “God (in his sacrifice) condemned sin in the flesh.”

object to which sacrifices ultimately referred, and to which a divine institution alone could attach them; how could it ever have entered into his mind to offer them? Could he think it a likely way of appeasing the vengeance of heaven, to destroy the very creatures which God had made, and which he daily supported, under pretence of offering them to him in sacrifice? Could he entertain so gross a notion as to imagine that God would eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Or, if he did, must he not, like Israel of old, have met with a severe reproof from the Almighty, for such an insult to his perfection, and such an indignity offered to the glory of his character? Finally, shall we suppose with some, that sacrifices might arise originally from a natural sentiment of the human mind, as an attempt to procure the favour of God by hardships and losses which men were willing to impose upon themselves? What is this but to reduce them to the notion of penances? one of the greatest corruptions of the truth that has hitherto appeared; and, therefore, instead of being acceptable to God, they must have been rejected by him with abhorrence.

What stronger evidence could be desired for this precious doctrine than what has now been produced? language cannot more forcibly express it. And to show that it is one of the most essential principles of revelation, it is woven into its very texture from beginning to end.

But perhaps it will be said, How can such a doctrine proceed from God? Is it not contrary to the first principle of justice? Is it not to reward men for a service which they have not performed, and to punish the innocent that the guilty may go free? How much more reasonable to suppose, that God will receive the returning sinner without any atonement! Does he stand in need of a compensation for the evil which we have done? "If we sin, what do we against him? and if our transgressions be multiplied, what do we unto him?"

And will men oppose their weak and narrow reasonings to the plainest testimony of the word of God; and that, too, in a matter which is evidently beyond their comprehension? Or, do they mean to employ them as arguments against its authenticity, because it incorporates into its very frame a doctrine so apparently absurd and incredible? This would be the most fair and consistent conduct. But I address myself only to those who acknowledge its divine authority. Come, then, let us reason together for a moment upon this interesting point.

You conceive that sin may very well be remitted without any atonement, without any penal satisfaction for it. But, can you show clearly that God has ever acted upon this principle in a single instance? Are you sure that you know all the reasons that God can have for the punishment of sin; and that there is nothing, either in his character or in the ends of his government, that makes it necessary to inflict it? Are you sure that justice does not require it; and that the truth of God may be broken, which is pledged for it? But, not to speak either of the justice or faithfulness of God; must not his holiness itself, and the infinite abhorrence of sin which belongs to his very nature, lead him to treat it with all that awful severity which it deserves? How unbecoming is it, then, to advance such a groundless assertion, especially when the evidence certainly lies upon the opposite side?

But you are confident that the atoning sacrifice of Christ cannot be admitted, because vicarious punishment is contrary to the very nature of justice.

Now it is surely somewhat strange, if it be so contrary to all our notions of justice, that an opinion of this kind should have universally prevailed. Nothing is more certain than that it has made a part of all the religions, both true and false, that ever appeared in the world; the several votaries of which, however widely they have differed in other respects, have united in the belief that sin may be expiated by vicarious sufferings, or sufferings in the room and for the benefit of others. Whence, then, has this universal opinion been derived? If it is the dictate of nature or of experience, then the dispute is at an end. If it has been derived from revelation, the only other source of information with which we are acquainted, the dispute will be equally at an end. For, I presume, you will not choose to maintain, against the prevailing voice, either of nature, of experience, or of revelation, that the ends of justice cannot be answered by accepting a satisfaction from a substitute who is able and willing to give it.

Still, however, you cannot but reject the doctrine of imputation, as at once absurd and iniquitous; because merit and demerit are altogether personal, and cannot be transferred to those to whom they do not really belong; nor can the rewards nor punishments be transferred which are annexed to them.

If, by the transference of merit or demerit, you mean, that the personal guilt or righteousness of one becomes the personal guilt or righteousness of another,—this is a position which no Christian, who understands what he says, will ever maintain: and it is so far from receiving any countenance from the doctrine of imputation, that it is evidently excluded by it. It is blasphemy to suppose that our Lord contracted any personal guilt, by the sins of his people being laid upon him when he was bearing the chastisement of their peace: and if it were possible, by any means, that what was personal righteousness or merit in him, should become personal righteousness or merit in us,—then it would not be imputed, for it would be truly and properly our own. But does it there-

fore follow, that the guilt or righteousness of one cannot be so far devolved upon another, or reckoned to his account, as that he shall suffer or be rewarded for it? A calm and thoughtful inquirer will certainly be cautious of hazarding such an assertion, lest he should run in opposition to matter of fact and experience.

It is not a little remarkable, that it seems to be the very constitution of Providence, in this world, that one set of creatures should derive their support and enjoyment from the sufferings, and even from the destruction of their fellow-creatures around them. When we examine the inferior creation, what vast multitudes of the irrational tribes do we see daily yielding up their lives for the subsistence and benefit of others! what numbers of them are continually put to death for the nourishment and comfort of man! Nay, do we not behold even the lower orders of the human species themselves ministering by their toils and hardships and sufferings, to the ease and convenience and enjoyment of the rest? It is true there is nothing of imputation in any of these cases. Notwithstanding, they lessen the difficulties on this interesting point. For, if it be the plan of God, in the natural world, that the good of some is promoted by the sufferings and services of others; why may not the government of the moral world admit of a similar principle? If we find in experience that our temporal interest is often promoted by the labours and sufferings of others; nay, that we are delivered even from distress and calamity by their intervention, and sometimes by their sustaining the very stroke which was ready to destroy us;—why should it appear incredible that our spiritual interest should be advanced in a similar manner, and that we should be delivered from that load of vengeance, which would sink us down to everlasting perdition, by the friendly intervention of one who is able to sustain all its weight?

But, what is more directly to the point before us, it is one of the most obvious truths relating to human life, that the effects of the good or bad actions of men are not confined to the persons themselves by whom they are performed: they shed a corresponding influence around them, to a greater or smaller extent, wherever they are found. How are the

families of those, for example, who have been eminently distinguished as public benefactors to mankind, esteemed and caressed by all who know them! On the other hand, how does the detestation in which those are held, who have been the scourges and pests of society, descend in some measure upon their very offspring, so that it requires more than ordinary character in these to countervail it!

It must indeed be confessed, that there is no instance, but that of the great atonement itself, in which men have been delivered from guilt by sufferings which are not their own: for this plain reason, that no sufferings of a mere creature could make that satisfaction which justice requires. We have, however, many undoubted examples of what perhaps it is not less difficult to account for;—men suffering in the righteous judgment of God, and sometimes immediately and visibly from his hand, not for their own sins only, but likewise for those of others. Let it not be thought that such sufferings are only of an outward or temporal nature. This has often been maintained in order to evade the argument arising from them. But the following instances will show that it is far from being the case.

What is the situation to which the Jewish people are reduced for an offence which was committed by their fathers more than seventeen hundred years ago! Is it only temporal disgrace or disadvantage to which they are subjected? Alas! this is the least part of the indignation which has been poured upon them. If we believe the apostle Paul, they are labouring under spiritual judgment,—the heaviest of all calamities: for “God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day,” Rom. xi. 8.—How melancholy is the state to which the posterity of those who composed the ancient churches of Asia are now reduced, because their fathers repented not at the call of the Redeemer, when he threatened to remove his candlestick out of its place! Are they not now deprived of the light and grace of the gospel, which they would otherwise have enjoyed, and sitting in the region and shadow of death?—And how deplorable is the condition of those who are sunk in the corruption and idolatry of antichrist! Are they not suffering that awful judgment with which God visited their

fathers, when he "sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved?" 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.

What is this now but the doctrine of imputation verified and vindicated by experience itself? And will it still be traduced as unworthy of God, when we see it a part of that order which he has established, and one of the evident principles upon which his government proceeds? The instances which have been recited are awful and standing monuments of it. And though we could expunge it entirely from the sacred code, yet, like the articles which have been formerly mentioned, it would still remain; for we should meet with it in one shape or another in almost every occurrence that passes before us. The institution of sacrifice, as I have particularly shown, had familiarized the idea of atonement to the human mind from very early times. And how many are the instances of those that we continually meet with, in whom that proverb is truly fulfilled, that "other men laboured, and they have entered into their labours?" Is it not astonishing, then, that men, professing fair and candid principles, should charge that as an incredibility upon revelation, which they are obliged to admit as a part of the plan of Providence itself?

But, there are two circumstances respecting the satisfaction of Christ, which, when carefully considered, will in a great measure remove the difficulties which attend it. The first is, that it was voluntarily offered, by one who had power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again; and therefore, neither was it incompetent for him to devote himself to sufferings and death, nor could any injury be done by inflicting them upon him. The second is, that it was a satisfaction by a kindred substitute, so intimately related, and indeed united, to those for whom it was made, that "they are members of his body, and of his flesh, and of his bones."

This is a truth of vast magnitude in the Christian scheme, though the pride of human reason has shown the same aversion to it as to most of the other doctrines which the gospel contains. Men cannot understand the principle upon which such an union is constituted: therefore they pronounce it

impossible that it can exist; and go about to explain into insignificance the strong and impressive language in which God has been pleased to reveal it. But do they clearly understand the principle which constitutes unity, either in the natural or moral world, in the various instances that come before them? Those who are accustomed to speculations of this kind will readily acknowledge that they are involved in much greater obscurity than is commonly imagined. And yet, upon the score of ignorance alone, not the union between Christ and his disciples only has been rejected, but likewise the union between the divine and human natures in his wonderful person, and the union of the Father and the Son, in whom, notwithstanding the diversity of persons, the divinity is the same.

I mean not, however, to enter into any defence or illustration at present of the Christian's union with his divine Lord. The Scripture undoubtedly represents it in a great variety of beautiful and striking images, employing the most intimate unities in nature to denote it.* And if it only be admitted as a principle, and applied to the subject which is now before us, it will set the doctrine of imputation and substitution in a consistent and intelligible view. For where is the difficulty in conceiving, according to the strictest rule of justice, that Christ should bear the punishment which was due to his people's sins, and that his righteousness and merits should be reckoned to their account; when they are conjoined together in so intimate a manner, that he is the head, and they are the members of his body, and make up "the fulness of him," or as it were the completeness of his person, "who filleth all in all," Eph. i. 23.

Behold, now, what full and satisfying evidence we have for this precious doctrine of the atonement and merits of Christ, as the ground of our pardon and acceptance with God; and how it remains firm and unshaken amidst the strongest efforts of human wisdom to overthrow it! Upon this principle, the Scripture revelation stands forth at once intelligible and consistent: the ancient institution of sacrifice appears to have been of the most important and neces-

* See John xv. 5; Eph. ii. 20, 21, and iv. 15, 16.

sary use ;—the glory of the divine perfection is highly illustrated ;—the comfort of the humbled sinner is secured ;—and even experience lends its aid in confirmation of the truth. But, in maintaining the contrary supposition, every thing is thrown into obscurity and disorder : the Scripture becomes unintelligible ;—the ancient sacrifices are little better than childish ceremonies ;—the character of God is defaced ;—the sensible ground of the sinner's comfort is withdrawn ;—and the Christian doctrine is opposed by reasonings, which, before they can be of any avail, must annihilate fact, and unhinge the measures of Providence in the government of the world.

I cannot leave this part of the subject, without taking notice of what is set up in the room of the true and proper atonement of Christ, by those who have laboured to deprive us of it. The most of Christians admit of something which they call atonement ; though many of them reject it in the only sense in which it can justly be understood. They acknowledge that the death of Christ was an expiatory sacrifice for sin ; and that God, out of regard to this sacrifice, condescends to pardon the believing penitent. Notwithstanding this, they strenuously deny that our iniquities were in any sense devolved on him, or that he made any penal satisfaction for them : and they tell us, that the atonement of Christ is only a wise expedient, which God has introduced, to prevent men from imagining that mercy is a facility in the divine nature, and to deter them from sin, by raising up this awful monument of his indignation against it.

It is not a little surprising that this account of the atonement should be proposed and adopted by men of ability and discernment, as that which reason and Scripture concur to authenticate, when it runs in direct opposition to both. At first sight, indeed, it carries a plausible aspect ; but, when attentively examined, it will appear fraught with absurdity and contradiction. If our iniquities were in no sense devolved upon Christ ; if the sufferings which he endured had nothing to do with the punishment of our guilt ; and if the hand of justice was no way concerned in these sufferings ;—with what propriety of language can the Scripture affirm, that “our iniquities were laid upon him ;” that “he suffered

and died for our sins ;” and that “ God set him forth a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins ;—that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus ! ” If these, and such expressions as these, with which the Scripture abounds, must be understood in so strange and unnatural a meaning as to exclude entirely the sense which they obviously contain, we need not hesitate to pronounce, that they are the worst chosen, and the most calculated to mislead that were ever employed by any writer.

But let us listen to the voice of reason itself upon the subject. Where is the wisdom of this singular expedient upon the principles that are here laid down ? How can the sufferings of perfect rectitude, without any imputation of guilt to occasion them, be considered as a monument of God’s indignation against sin ? In this view, should we not rather be led to conclude, that his indignation was pointed at a very different object, when we behold innocence suffering without any adequate cause that can be assigned for it ? And is it not quite inconceivable, how all the pains and agonies which the Saviour endured, can deter men from sin, if they are by no means to be understood as the punishment of it ? Must we then, in rejecting the only foundation of a sinner’s hope, admit all these gross and palpable absurdities : —that the Scripture is best understood in the sense which appears most contrary to it ;—that the indignation of God against sin is most awfully displayed when it seems to be pointed at innocence and rectitude ;—and that the most effectual way of deterring men from iniquity, is to exhibit a scene of the deepest suffering which is quite unconnected with the punishment of it ? At least, let us beware of ascribing such a scheme to the wisdom of God, which is one of the greatest demonstrations of the weakness and folly of man. You see then, that there is no other alternative, but either flatly to deny the doctrine of atonement altogether, or else to receive the plain scriptural account of it, as a satisfaction which Christ made to the justice of his Father by bearing the punishment which our sins deserved ; for there is nothing which can be set up as a medium between these, which does not evidently betray its false and spurious origin.

I shall have occasion afterwards to show, that this doctrine, so far from being unfriendly to the interests of holiness, supplies its most animating motives. In the meantime, let me only observe, that, as it is of the utmost importance in itself, in every view in which it can be contemplated, it is likewise such a radical principle in the scheme of our redemption, that most of the other distinguishing doctrines of the gospel will stand or fall with it. They who believe the true Scripture doctrine of the atonement and righteousness of Christ, must of course believe his real and proper deity. For, were he not possessed of divine perfection and excellency, it is impossible that he could either have borne the weight of almighty vengeance in expiating human guilt, or that, by the merit of his obedience he could have procured the richest blessings of heaven for an inheritance to his saints. On the other hand, as it is highly incredible that a person of infinite perfection and dignity should have come down from heaven to earth, merely to publish a doctrine which was more fully revealed by his apostles after him, and to die a martyr for its truth, which has been done by many of his disciples with less anxiety and apprehension than he discovered; we find, in fact, those who reject this precious doctrine, disparaging the dignity of the Redeemer, and, in the awful language of Scripture, “denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction.” And as there is no higher evidence for the divine personality of the Holy Spirit than for that of the Son, this likewise is given up; the consequence of which is, that the whole doctrine of sanctification, which is ascribed to his influence, falls to the ground. In a word, if this pillar and stay of the truth be once removed, the whole fabric of Christianity will be laid in ruins; and the forlorn and helpless sinner, bereaved of his only security and comfort, must be driven for shelter to the miserable patchwork of human invention, which, in the day of trial and decision, will be swept entirely away.

Think now, ye humble followers of a crucified Lord, in what high estimation you should hold this interesting doctrine. What prospects of God, of providence, and of grace, does it lay open to your view! Here alone you see the

character of God unmutilated and consistent, and his plans harmonious. Here you behold the glory of his perfection most radiantly displayed, in the united exercise of justice, and mercy, and sanctity, and truth; in that scheme of his unsearchable wisdom which the highest created intelligences contemplate with admiration. From this doctrine, likewise, what a divine tranquillity, and what a lively hope, do you happily experience! You feel your souls at once humbled and purified and exalted by it. And O! when that solemn period shall arrive, which shall introduce you into the presence of your Saviour and of your God, how will you triumph and exult in it! Then shall you join the heavenly church, with equal accents, in that enraptured song,—“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever.” And again, “Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

II. The other very momentous doctrine, in which the method of our salvation is still farther unfolded, is now to be considered. It has already been announced in the following terms:—That it is only by the all-powerful energy of the Holy Spirit upon the soul, that we can be renewed and sanctified after the image of God.

If mankind are really in such a state of corruption, as that in which the Scripture represents them till they are recovered by the grace of the gospel; we need no other evidence to convince us of the necessity of supernatural divine influence to the conversion and sanctification of every sinner. There they are represented as “dead in trespasses and sins,” Eph. ii. 1. Their very mind, it is said, “is carnal, is enmity against God; and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” From which it is peremptorily concluded, that “they that are in the flesh,” that is, in the corrupt state of nature, “cannot please God,” Rom. viii. 7, 8. Mankind, then, being thus lost in corruption, and in spiritual death, can only be revived and purified by the power of almighty grace.

The Scripture informs us, that the Spirit of God is the divine operator in this great work: that, by his wonderful

agency, those that were dead in sins are quickened, Eph. ii. 1;—that they pass from death to life, 1 John iii. 14;—that “they are born again,” John iii. 3, being, as it were, introduced into a new state of existence, and endowed with desires, affections, and dispositions, corresponding to it;—that they become “new creatures,” 2 Cor. v. 17, and “are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost,” Titus iii. 5;—that “the eyes of their understanding are opened,” Acts xxvi. 18; and whereas formerly they were darkness, now “they are light in the Lord,” Eph. v. 8;—and that their principles of action, and the great objects of their pursuit, are entirely changed. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,” 2 Cor. v. 17. The Scripture likewise informs us, that, to accomplish these purposes of unmerited and sovereign grace, the Spirit of God is “given to them,” 1 John iii. 24;—that he “dwells within them,” Rom. viii. 11, and “abides with them for ever,” John xiv. 16;—that they are “led by the Spirit,” Rom. viii. 14;—that, through his influence, “they mortify the deeds of the body,” Rom. viii. 13, and bring forth his genuine “fruit, which is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord,” Eph. v. 9, 10: and thus God not only “begins the good work” in the soul, but “performs it unto the day of Jesus Christ,” Phil. i. 6; “working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure,” Phil. ii. 13.

These, and many other passages of the New Testament, do most certainly declare, not only the necessity of divine supernatural influence, but likewise its sure and infallible efficacy in the conversion and sanctification of every sinner. Nay, they ascribe the whole of that blessed work, from beginning to end, to the all-quickening and purifying grace of the Holy Ghost. And that man must have a strange aversion to the truth as it is in Jesus, who can pervert them to any different meaning. How indeed is it possible, with any degree of plausibility, to divest them of this their native and obvious import? Will it be said, that the giving of the Spirit to Christians is to be understood only of the communication of his miraculous powers to the church, which have been long since withdrawn? Melancholy would the consequence

of this evasion be: for then it would necessarily follow, that Christians could not any longer be “renewed and sanctified unto obedience,” nor could they “mortify the deeds of the body,” or cease to “fulfil the lusts of the flesh;” because all these effects are as really ascribed to the operation of the Spirit, as casting out devils, or making the lame to walk. And it cannot be shown that now, more than formerly, “any one can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, but God only.”

Will it then be pretended, that the quickening and sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit is nothing more than the effect of the superior light and power of the gospel revelation, which possesses the distinguishing character of “the ministration of the Spirit,” and the very words of which are said “to be spirit and to be life?” Upon this interpretation we should never have read, that “Paul planted, and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase,” 1 Cor. iii. 6;—that “the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she might attend to the things that were spoken of Paul,” Acts xvi. 14;—and that when the preaching of the gospel was followed with remarkable success, “it came not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance,” 1 Thess. i. 5. Upon this principle likewise we should never have heard such prayers for Christians as these:—“That the Spirit of wisdom and revelation might be given them,” Eph. i. 17;—that they “might be comforted and stablished in every good work and work,” 2 Thess. ii. 17;—and “that the God of peace might sanctify them wholly, working in them that which is well pleasing in his sight,” 1 Thess. v. 23. and Heb. xiii. 21;—nor could the apostles have given thanks to God on their behalf, “because he had chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,” 2 Thess. ii. 13. In all these instances, a divine supernatural energy, quite distinct from the word, and absolutely necessary to give it effect, is too evidently supposed for any fair and reasonable man to deny it.

I say nothing about the scheme of reducing all the high and honourable appellations, by which Christians are distinguished in the New Testament, to the mean inadequate sense of denoting only the outward privileges of the gospel which wicked men may enjoy as well as the saints. Were

it deserving of credit, it would indeed subvert the whole method of salvation which the scripture lays down. But is it possible to believe, that the Spirit of truth and of holiness should call those who are the slaves of sin, *children of God, new creatures, faithful, sanctified in Christ Jesus*, and by such like appellations, for no other reason but because they have enjoyed the privileges of the gospel dispensation, while they have perverted and abused them all; and thereby have made themselves much more the children of hell, than if the word of salvation had never reached their ears? This is such an insult to the common sense of mankind, that it is not entitled to a serious refutation. But unluckily for the inventors of this scheme, it cannot entirely exclude the work of the Spirit upon the souls of Christians, notwithstanding all the length which it has been carried. For, we have already seen, that even after they have attained the dispositions and habits of holiness, they are represented as led by the Spirit in every instance of their exertion. And if his divine energies are necessary to the saints, even in the most advanced stages of their character on earth, how can we suppose that that character could be originally formed without them?

But though the schemes which have been devised to explain away the precious doctrines of the gospel were attended with no absurdities, one should think that men of sensibility would almost blush to reject them with so great violence, considering what poor provision they make to supply their room. This is nowhere more remarkable than with respect to the renewing and sanctifying grace of God. What contemptible effect have the finest theories of virtue produced where this doctrine has been neglected? I cannot better express myself upon this point than in the words of a late excellent writer. Speaking of the enemies of this doctrine, he says, "Their conduct shows that their morality consists chiefly in fruitless speculations, and that their schemes are contrived and made use of for amusement, more than anything else. They may have the same effect with other arts and sciences, to gratify men's curiosity, and perhaps their vanity; but the art of making men truly virtuous and happy, by their own skill and strength, is not yet invented. The result of all efforts of this kind has only been, to expose the

weakness and folly of the undertakers, and to confirm the truth of the gospel, and the necessity of the grace which is offered in it." *

But this doctrine, in the manner in which we have stated it from the word of God, has not escaped the censure even of those who hold the general notion of divine influence upon the mind. It will therefore be necessary, in justice to the subject, to consider the chief objections which they have brought against it; which indeed are, for the most part, the same with those which infidels themselves have insisted on.

In the first place, then, it has been strongly urged, that if men by nature are unable to perform any thing that is spiritually good, it is in vain for them to attempt it, and it is most inconsistent in those who maintain this principle to exhort them to it.

When we reflect, that the doctrine of rich and sovereign grace is held out in the gospel as the remedy for the evil which is here complained of, and is offered to every sinner who is desirous to receive it; this objection is divested of all its force. With what colour of reason can a man pretend to excuse himself from the performance of his duty, because of the disability which is natural to him, when he is warranted to have recourse to almighty aid? And where is the inconsistency, upon this well-adapted plan, in the ministers of Christ addressing to sinners the instructions, and warnings, and calls of the gospel, when they are the very means which God has appointed, of awakening them to spiritual sensibility, of convincing them of their weakness, as well as of their misery, and of leading them to that grace by which out of weakness they may be made strong?

But the chief deception upon this point arises from overlooking or mistaking the distinctive character of that inability in which man is involved. It does not consist in the want of natural faculties and talents for the service of God; for these are the very principles by which he is constituted a reasonable and moral agent; but it consists in a total and obstinate dislike to those holy exercises for which they were originally bestowed. Were this rightly understood and at-

tended to, it would effectually deprive the sinner of every plea which he could offer in his own excuse. It is impossible for him to deny, that the faculties and talents which he possesses, might be as fitly and profitably employed in the service of God, as in the slavery of sin. He is obliged likewise to acknowledge, that conscience itself condemns him for applying them to any different purpose. But then he feels such an extreme and fixed aversion to that service, that he cannot in good earnest bring his mind and his heart to engage in it. And what is the consequence? Will he be so unreasonable as to suppose, that his obligation to duty is dissolved by his unwillingness to perform it? As well might a debtor expect to be excused from the payment of what he owed, because he had such a strong and unconquerable attachment to his pelf, that he could not possibly part with it. Upon this clear and evident principle, then, every mouth must be stopped: and the sinner must be conscious of his obligation, even while the perversity of his nature is disposed to remonstrate against it; for it is impossible to set up any reasonable plea in his defence.

Men do not seem to understand what they say, when they represent a sinner as having ground, either to murmur at this doctrine, or to draw apologies and excuses from it. While he remains insensible of his inability, he surely can neither be supposed to complain of it, nor can it prevent him from exerting any of those fancied powers which he may imagine he possesses. And to suppose him to feel and to regret it, and yet, with the remedy full in his offer, not to avail himself of so great a privilege, is a state of the human mind which is quite inconceivable. The very discovery of his forlorn and wretched condition must make him to feel the necessity and value of the offered mercy. And it is as unnatural to suppose, that he should not instantly and thankfully receive it, as to suppose, that a man ready to perish for want would reject a morsel of bread that was given him for his relief. Indeed, to speak more properly, whenever the sinner is deeply penetrated with a sense of that obstinate aversion to what is good in which his inability consists, and is anxious to counteract it, this ought to be considered as the remedy in some measure already applied; for this desire in the very nature of the

case must destroy the aversion so far as it goes. It is therefore a most encouraging presumption that the work of grace is begun in his soul. And O! when it shall have accomplished its grand achievements, and when he shall have tasted its blessed and wonderful fruits, how will he stand astonished at the riches of divine and sovereign mercy to him! With what humility and self-abasement will he acknowledge, that God might have justly left him for ever to those perverse dispositions to which he was formerly a willing captive! And how will his heart burn with gratitude for that unmerited grace by which he has obtained so great a deliverance!

I should scarcely take notice of the objection against the absolute efficacy of this grace, that it is inconsistent with the liberty of human actions, were it not that it still continues to be urged with a kind of apparent triumph. Nothing can be more devoid of any shadow of evidence than this objection. It proceeds equally from a lamentable ignorance of the nature of divine influence in the conversion and sanctification of a sinner, and of the very constitution of the human mind. I appeal to the common understanding and judgment of mankind. Is it not the very nature of the human mind to be influenced by the truth, when it is made strongly to perceive it? Is the mind less voluntary in its operations by being subject to that influence? On the contrary, does it not more cordially choose, and more firmly and unalterably acquiesce in the choice which it has made, the more it is determined by its prevailing energy? And will any man presume to assert, that the Spirit of God cannot open the eyes of the mind, and, in a manner perfectly consentaneous to its rational and moral character, give it such a perception of the infinitely interesting objects of religion and eternity, as shall infallibly attach the will and the affections to them? And where the determination is still a matter of choice, although of a choice that can scarcely admit of a moment's hesitation, it cannot surely be said that any violence is done to the liberty of the human mind, or that any sort of restraint is imposed upon it. This charge, then, appears utterly destitute of all foundation in truth; and I have chosen to combat it upon these obvious principles, as level to the capacities of ordinary Christians,

rather than by entering into any of those bewildering speculations which it has so often occasioned.*

One other objection it may be proper to consider. It is this: that if the grace of God be so infallible in its operation that it effectually converts and sanctifies the sinner who receives it, then it cannot be the privilege of all men. But this, it is alleged, is contrary to the most express declarations of Scripture,—that “God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth,” 1 Tim. ii. 4; and that “he is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” 2 Pet. iii. 9. As this objection is an appeal to several passages of Scripture, it will be sufficient to repel it, if it can be shown, that they give it neither foundation nor support.

In the first of these passages, the apostle cannot be understood to speak of individuals, but of ranks, and orders, and bodies of men. This is evident from his exhorting that “prayers, and supplications, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;” that is, for persons in all the various ranks and conditions of life, and particularly, “for kings, and for all that are in authority.” To enforce this, he observes, “that it is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved.” As the reason therefore ought not to be stretched beyond the subject to which it is applied, the meaning can only be, that salvation was not to be confined to any one nation or rank or order of men what-

* I am not however of opinion, that the whole of the Spirit's influence, in the conversion of a sinner, is confined to illumination alone. Not to speak of the energy which is requisite to quicken the soul that is dead in sin, so great is the force of evil habits, that the new convert must enter very awkwardly upon his Christian course, and feel much resistance from their influence, unless it were removed by a supernatural power. But experience shows us that this is far from being the case. Let the history of the saints declare how many trophies of grace have been raised up even of those who have been under the most inveterate habits of sin, who have instantly engaged in the service of religion, and performed its most difficult duties with as much readiness and ease as if they had been accustomed to them from their earliest years. This cannot be accounted for upon the principle of mere illumination. But as it lies beyond the limits of the above objection, it is not necessary at present to enlarge upon it.

ever. It was to be extended to persons of every condition ; and even heathen kings and rulers themselves were to come to the knowledge of the truth, who had least opportunity of being acquainted with it. This intimation was admirably fitted to soften the prejudices of the Jewish converts against their Pagan neighbours, and to prevent Christians in those times from imagining that salvation was to be confined to the poor ; a mistake into which they might readily fall, because “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble were called.”

With respect to the other passage, it is confessedly very obscure, and hard to be understood. It can scarcely be doubted that it is of a prophetic nature ; and it probably refers to the future conversion of the whole Jewish nation, an event which must take place before the coming of the day of the Lord.* At any rate it is plain, that it cannot be understood in the sense which this objection requires, were it only for the reason which the passage itself assigns. It would be a strange reason indeed, for the long delay of the coming of the day of the Lord, to any generation of men to whom it could hitherto be addressed, to tell them, “that God was not willing that any of them should perish.” If it had been the day of their death that was delayed on this account, that more means might be used for their salvation, and that if possible they might be persuaded to turn from the evil and live, the argument would have been both intelligible and affecting ; but when that solemn period arrives, then the long-suffering of God towards sinners is finished : then their character can never be altered. No calls to repentance can be addressed to them any more. And it cannot have the smallest effect in bettering their condition, whether the day of the Lord should come immediately after their departure out of this world, or should be delayed for thousands of years.†

* See Mede's exposition of 2 Pet. ch. iii.

† It must surely be matter of regret to the friends of religion, that the Scripture should be interpreted in such a manner, whether from inadvertency or from any other cause, as to make the Spirit of truth use arguments, and assign reasons, which would not be received from any ordinary author. The above are the only passages in the

Let none however presume to draw any such consequence from this doctrine, as that the calls of the gospel are not addressed with sincerity and earnestness to all who hear them. There is indeed a difficulty here which we cannot fully resolve. But this difficulty will recur upon us with equal force on every scheme. We may find it hard to reconcile the many expostulations that are addressed to all, to turn from their evil ways that they may live, and the great concern which is expressed for their salvation, by that God who has the hearts of all men in his hand, and turneth them whithersoever he will, with any limitation of his grace to a determinate number. But we are as little able to reconcile them with the melancholy and fatal event that any should finally perish. And it is not unreasonable to suppose that this may be beyond the power of any created understanding. It is, however, only fulfilling the Scripture, "that God's ways are past finding out." The reasons of the divine procedure lie often concealed from our view. And even if they were communicated to us, it might be doubtful, in many cases, whether we should be able to comprehend them. It becomes us therefore to receive with simplicity the plain declarations of Scripture on this subject, though we cannot fully account for them, saying in the spirit of humble adoration, "How unsearchable are thy judgments, O Lord!"

Such now is the vindication which I have offered of these precious doctrines of the grace of God, from which I hope it will evidently appear, that there is nothing in their character which, even in the eye of sober reason itself, there is any cause to be ashamed of. The pride of human wisdom may indeed sometimes stagger at the mysterious truth, through unbelief. But candid and inquiring men have always acknowledged that its mysteriousness is no sufficient ground for rejecting it.—Let us hear the judgment of a late cele-

New Testament where the supposed declaration seems to be expressly made; and yet we have seen that they have no such meaning. I have therefore taken no notice of expressions of a similar kind in other books of Scripture, being persuaded, that when a doctrine is not revealed in the New Testament, which contains the clearest and fullest discovery of the mind of God, in vain do we look for it in the Old.

brated academician upon this point, who was never accused of the weakness of an over easy belief. "The doctrines of Christianity," says he, "have never yet been proved to be impossible. They are only obscure, and they cannot be otherwise. If God should reveal to men any of the secrets upon which he has formed the plan of things, these must appear to us incomprehensible. The degree of clearness in any case, depends on the proportion between the ideas of him that speaks, and of him that hears; and what immense disproportion is there in the case before us!—If any of the sacred writers had been so inspired, that, instead of giving us some detached doctrines, he had deduced these doctrines from their dependence on, and delivered them in their connection with, the universal plan, there is no reason to think that we should have been able to understand him. The principles with which he must have set out would have been too much raised above us, and the chain of propositions would have been far too long; and besides, it is not to be doubted, that ideas must enter into such a plan, of quite a different order from those with which we are acquainted." * And let us listen to the observation of another distinguished writer, that "difficulties in speculation are a part of our trial, just in the same manner as difficulties in practice." † To which I may add, that it is one of the glorious triumphs of revealed truth, when it once enters into the heart, that it "casts down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 5.

All that now remains is, to describe the holy and blessed effects which are produced by the much injured but inestimable doctrines of the gospel, wherever they are cordially received. They are "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

It may seem strange to some, when I assert that the doctrines of the gospel not only most effectually secure the great interests of morality, but that they form a character so sublime and excellent, that, while it cannot be produced by any different principles, the general mass of nominal Christians

* Œuvres de Maupertuis.

† Butler's Analogy.

seem scarcely able to reach it even in conception. This however is as certain as the existence of real holiness upon the earth in the midst of prevailing corruption. There is nothing that is more frequent in the mouths of many, especially of those who are enemies to these doctrines, than the morality of the gospel. Its obligation indeed is universally acknowledged, and its excellency praised; and yet perhaps there is nothing which in its distinguishing and supereminent qualities is less generally understood. Men understand something of the nature of common justice and fidelity, in their intercourse with one another. They know the obligation of a becoming regularity in their own deportment; and they have learned the duties of kindness and beneficence from the dictates of humanity itself. But do they understand aright either the extent or the importance of Christian piety, sobriety, humility, self-denial, contempt of the world, and heavenly mindedness? Do they understand the meaning and obligation of "laying down their lives for the brethren," 1 John iii. 16, and of "loving their very enemies?" Matt. v. 44. Do they know the import of "being crucified to the world," and "having the world crucified to them?" Gal. vi. 14. Have they learned the meaning of these great moral maxims which our Lord delivered: "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are ye poor; for ye shall be rich. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake: rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven?" On the contrary, do we not see them acting in direct opposition to these principles every day, while they seem scarcely to imagine that they have done amiss? The truth is, they either have no conception of those holy and elevated tempers, or if they have, they consider them as forming only an ideal character, which cannot be realized. Happily, however, it has been exemplified in the lives of genuine Christians in every age. Let us take a view of it, as it shines with lustre in the conduct and spirit of the primitive disciples.

In what an amiable light are they exhibited in the sacred volume! They are represented as a society "not of the world," and "therefore the world hated them," John xv. 19;

because they reversed all its maxims. The love of God was their supreme affection; and the offices of devotion were their most delightful exercise. They looked "not to the things which are seen and are temporal, but to the things which are not seen, and which are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 18. They had their "conversation," and their treasure, and their hearts, all "in heaven," and were "like men that wait for the coming of their Lord," Phil. iii. 20. "They were troubled on every side, but not distressed; apparently sorrowful, yet always rejoicing," 2 Cor. iv. 8, and vi. 10. "Nay, they even gloried in tribulation" itself, Rom. v. 3, knowing that it was for "the trial" and triumph "of their faith, that it might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 7. They were humble, self-diffident, and self-denied; placing all their dependence upon the grace that is in Christ. "They walked" continually "in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," Acts ix. 31. Their souls were filled with admiration of redeeming love; and their mouths with the high praises of God. And the whole "multitude of them that believed, were of one heart, and of one soul," Acts iv. 32;—"they loved as brethren," 1 Pet. iii. 8; and were benevolent and friendly to all. What an admirable picture is here exhibited to our view! What a total renovation of the human character! What elevation of sentiment and spirit! What fervent piety! What warmth of affection! What purity and rectitude of disposition! And what superiority to all worldly considerations, by which mankind everywhere are almost universally swayed!

Such is the character which the gospel forms. It is produced by its peculiar doctrines. And despised as they commonly are, were it not for them, no such character could ever be formed.—Let us examine this matter a little, in which the credit of Christianity is so deeply concerned.

It will readily be granted, that the more powerful the discovery of the evil and danger of sin, the better is it fitted to deter men from every appearance of it, and to make them seek and strive to the utmost to be preserved and delivered from it. But how is this most powerful discovery to be obtained? Whether is it by supposing HIM who can best judge

of its deformity and demerit to pardon the sinner without any expiation of his guilt; or by beholding him exacting complete satisfaction for it, even when his own Son was the sufferer? What is it that can impress us with the most alarming sense of the malignity and inveteracy of this ruinous disease? Is it the doctrine which teaches us that we can remedy it by our own endeavours, or that which informs us that nothing but the power of almighty grace can overcome and destroy it? And if these awful discoveries are necessary, in the judgment of unerring wisdom, for awakening and convincing sinners, and persuading them to listen to the gospel call; is it likely that this will be accomplished by any less affecting representations?

But the doctrines of the gospel, when they are set home upon the conscience, are not only dissuasive of sin in the highest possible degree; but they bind the soul to holiness by the most animating considerations, and are fitted to produce an obedience, of a far more generous and elevated kind, than what can ever result from any of those spurious schemes by which Christianity has been so often disgraced. No principle can more effectually warm and enliven the heart than a sense of the obligation which the Christian owes to God's pardoning mercy. But how is this obligation most deeply felt? Is it by receiving the communication of that mercy as due to our repentance? or rather, is it not evidently by beholding the very pardon which we have obtained, and which we had in us nothing to merit, written, as I may speak, even with the blood of the Son of God, shed to procure it for us? In this way alone, we are penetrated with a sense of the inestimable benefit, and are made to feel that we are infinitely indebted to that rich and sovereign mercy which has bestowed it. Upon this principle, likewise, what an irresistible force do we perceive in the affecting argument, that we are "not our own, but bought with a price," and therefore should "glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are his!" And how constraining the influence of the love of Christ in making us "to live not to ourselves, but to him who died for us, and rose again!"

These moving considerations, likewise, do not diminish but increase the force of the other arguments and motives to

holiness, and against sin, which are commonly used. The Christian perceives as strongly as others, that sin is the ruin and misery of the soul, that it is a deadly poison, and that it makes men at last like vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction. The beauty of holiness, to say the least, appears as bright and splendid in his eyes as in those of others, and its necessity as indispensable. And can he be supposed to feel the less, either the evil of the one, or the importance and excellency of the other, because he believes that "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Titus ii. 14. It is too evident to be insisted on, that this astonishing truth must heighten all these interesting sentiments, and add greatly to the impression which they would otherwise make.

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." The obligations to holiness upon this scheme are not only fully maintained, but they are brought down upon the conscience with such a weight of evidence, and such an energy of persuasive argument, as, were it not for the experience of the malignity of the human heart, one would be tempted to pronounce to be almost quite irresistible. Let me ask now, where do we meet with the best friends to the interests of genuine holiness? Is it among those who employ only a part of the motives which Christianity proposes in its support, or among those who urge and inculcate the whole? To whom are mankind most indebted as the instruments of maintaining its vast concerns? Is it to those who enliven every other consideration in its behalf, by the moving arguments which evangelical truth supplies; or to those who deny the very doctrines in which alone they are to be found? I leave it with every candid person to answer these questions calmly and seriously for himself.

But to make ample provision for the sanctification of a sinner, is not the sole excellency of the gospel. It likewise builds his security and hope upon the surest grounds. It is the very genius of Christianity to communicate peace and joy to all who have imbibed its spirit. There God has prepared "strong consolation for those who have fled for refuge,

to lay hold upon the hope set before them," Heb. vi. 18. Of this the early Christians afford a demonstrative and a delightful proof. It is impossible to read their history in the New Testament, without perceiving that they were under the prevailing influence of this elevated temper. "They joyed in God through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 11; "whom having not seen they loved, and in whom though they saw him not, yet believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. What an animation and ardour did this give to their obedience! Their dutiful service stands eminently distinguished from every thing of the kind, where this elevated frame is wanting. "They served God in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter," Rom. vii. 6. But how is this heavenly joy to be inspired? Is it by the assured persuasion, that, believing in Christ, we shall never perish; and that, being justified freely through the redemption that is in him, we shall most certainly be glorified also? Or is it by being told that we may enjoy all the privileges and benefits of the divine favour to-day, and to-morrow be totally deprived of them? Upon this last principle, it is absolutely impossible that the soul could arise to any thing like holy confidence or triumph, or that we could ever join in that bold unanswerable challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" or in what is afterwards asserted, "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39. Here, then, we evidently see, that these precious doctrines of the gospel produce a more refined and animated obedience than any other principles can possibly do; and I cannot help observing, by the way, that the firmest conclusion might be drawn from this circumstance, that these were the very doctrines which the first Christians believed, because they are the only doctrines that could inspire their sublime and generous spirit.

One other remark shall finish the evidence on this important subject. It has been the complaint of moralists, both in former and latter times, that the qualities which are necessary

to constitute a perfect character, are so opposite in their tendencies, that they can scarcely be made to operate together in any great degree:—That those, for instance, who are formed to softness and gentleness of disposition, are seldom capable of any great and noble actions; and that those, on the other hand, who are of an aspiring temper, are for the most part of a troublesome and restless spirit, and strangers to that peace in which the comfort of society so much consists. And hence it has gone into a maxim, which is, alas! too well justified in experience, that great virtues are nearly allied to great vices. This is an evil which must ever be irremediable upon the principles of human wisdom. But “those things which are impossible with men, are possible with God.” By the doctrines of the gospel these apparent contrarieties are reconciled; and the character which is formed upon them has often exhibited the gentleness of the lamb united to the boldness of the lion, and the humility of a child combined with the dignity of an angel.

We are now, I hope, prepared to explain this curious fact. We have seen already, how much these doctrines are calculated to awaken every tender sensibility in our frame, and at the same time to carry us on, by the strongest impulse, to whatever is excellent and great. And when we reflect, that the wonderful plan of redemption which they unfold, is entirely of unmerited and sovereign grace, that we owe every holy disposition to supernatural influence, and are accepted in every service only through the merits of the Saviour; self-estimation falls prostrate before these humbling truths, and a sense of unworthiness and obligation pervades the heart. “Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.” A high degree of improvement in every amiable and excellent quality, untarnished by vanity, and untainted with pride, is justly held to be a most finished character in the eye of the world itself. And it is the glory of the gospel, that, by its doctrines alone, this character can be produced.

What accumulated evidence have we now before us, that the doctrines we have been contemplating are divine, and that they contain the plan, the only plan of infinite wisdom, for delivering sinners from destruction, and making them a

holy people to the Lord? This wonderful plan shall be fully accomplished. The providence of God knows how to advance its progress; and there is no "understanding, or counsel, or might," that can prevail against it.

Melancholy thoughts indeed are apt to rush into our minds, when we survey the present external appearance of the Christian churches. Alas! how are they fallen from their former purity and zeal! There we behold religion languishing, infidelity lifting up her head, and licentiousness unashamed leading her votaries along. And what is the reason? It is because they have mostly departed from those great and cardinal doctrines which were once their glory; and therefore we need not be surprised at this sad reverse.

It is likewise a discouraging reflection, that, during the long period of almost eighteen hundred years since its first publication, Christianity has only had a partial and circumscribed extension; not to speak of its having been reduced, for a considerable part of that period, to so low a state that it was scarcely visible. This has always been considered as a very gravelling fact; and it is impossible to account for it, without admitting the same sovereignty of the divine counsels, in the propagation of the gospel, by which the plan itself is so remarkably distinguished. But when we look forward to its future triumphs, through the medium of prophetic vision, our faith is strengthened, and our spirits are exhilarated with the glorious prospect. We see the time approaching, and probably now at no great distance, when it shall make the most rapid progress, and every opposition shall be beat down before it, till it extend its salutary influence over all the earth. Then "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it," Isa. ii. 2. Then "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ," Rev. xi. 15. Then "the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted," Isa. ii. 11. And then "all the ends of the earth shall turn to him," Psal. xxii. 27; "and all nations shall serve him," Psal. lxxii. 11. There is scarcely any thing that seems more to have elevated the conceptions of the ancient prophets than this glorious

period, though they beheld it only in distant prospect. They employed and even exhausted their boldest imagery in describing it. I forbear at present collecting the many admirable passages on this point, with which their writings abound. Let me only observe, that the discoveries they have made afford the strongest encouragement to Christians, to exert their utmost endeavours for the propagation and success of the gospel, from the persuasion that their labour shall not be in vain.

In promoting this benevolent design, the suggestions of human ingenuity must be excluded; the means which unerring wisdom has appointed must be adopted; the word of salvation must be clearly and faithfully declared; and, like the first teachers of Christianity, those to whom it is committed must "by manifestation of the truth, commend themselves to every man's conscience as in the sight of God." The same doctrines by which the conversion of the world was begun, must finally accomplish it; and it will be found, in the issue, that in vain shall men attempt it upon any different plan. But let it not be forgotten, that after all that can be done in this important work, the whole is in the hand of God, and therefore success is to be expected only from his favour and blessing.

THE
PROGRESS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

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PREFATORY NOTICE.

THOMAS HARDY, D.D., the only son of the Rev. Henry Hardy, one of the ministers of Culross,—described by Sir Henry Moncreiff, in his *Life of Dr. Erskine*, as “a faithful and conscientious minister, who died in the prime of life, universally respected and regretted,”—was born in 1748, and lost his father in 1752. Under the care of his mother he was carefully educated, and after passing through the ordinary course of study at the grammar-school, university and divinity hall, was licensed at an early age to preach the gospel. His first charge was that of the parish of Ballingry in Fifeshire, in which he had a small estate inherited from his father. As his first publication, entitled “*The Views which Revelation exhibiteth of the General History of Man considered*,” was a Discourse preached before the Commissioner at the meeting of the General Assembly of 1775, his ordination probably took place two or three years previous to that date. While in this retired situation, he published, in 1782, a tract bearing the impression of powers of thought and composition of no ordinary kind, under the title of “*The Principles of Moderation, addressed to the Clergy of the popular interest of the Church of Scotland*,” proposing a modification of the law of patronage. The ability of the publication was universally admitted, but the proposal it made and advocated found no favour with either of the great ecclesiastical parties. It contributed, however, to make its author known; and thus probably was not without its influence in procuring his removal to Edinburgh in 1784, to what was accounted then one of the highest dignities of the Established church,—the collegiate charge of the High church in Edinburgh, where he had as his senior colleague, the celebrated Dr. Hugh Blair. Naturally of a delicate constitution, he soon began

to suffer from speaking in so large a church and addressing so large a congregation, and symptoms indicating the hazard of his contracting serious pulmonary disease having appeared, he was induced, in 1785, to resign his charge in the High church, and travelling into the south of France and into Spain, spent the winter of 1785-6 there. This alteration of climate produced a very happy change on the state of his health, and was probably the means of prolonging his valuable life some years. On his return to Scotland, the magistrates of Edinburgh, considering that the High church was too large for his voice, and the duties of the charge too arduous for his constitution, yet unwilling to lose the advantage of his high talents, presented him to the collegiate charge of the New North, or the Little church as it was frequently called. In this charge he continued till his death, and had for his associate the Rev. Dr. Gloag, a man of great worth, with whom he lived on terms of cordial friendship. Soon after his return from the continent, he was appointed by the Crown Regius professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Edinburgh, a situation for which his turn of mind and course of study peculiarly fitted him. He entered upon the discharge of the duties of his new office in the session 1788-9, and continued them till the session 1795-6. The plan which he had laid down for himself was very extensive. It included an Introductory course on the various forms of superstition: the Eastern—viz. the Sabeian, the Magian, the Braminic, the Tartar, and the Chinese; and the Western—the Egyptian, the Syrian, the Greek, the Roman, the Arabian. Of this course he had only written out lectures on the first great division,—the Eastern superstitions. Then followed a course of lectures on the History of the Jewish Church, from the call of Abraham to the coming of our Lord. In the history of the Christian church, properly so called, after a considerably minute account of the history and doctrines of Jesus Christ and the apostles, he divided the remaining part of his course into four periods: I. The period of progress, from the fall of Jerusalem to the edict of Constantine, in A.D. 312. II. The period of decline, from the edict of Constantine to the Arabian conquest. III. The period of corruption, from the Arabian conquest to the Reformation. IV. The period of recovery, from the Reformation to the present time. He lived to bring down the history to the time of Constantine; and it required two sessions to deliver the lectures he had composed.

No person acquainted with Dr. Hardy's occasional publications, indeed no one who has read the sermon on "The Progress of the Christian Religion," with which this volume of Tracts is enriched, can doubt that these lectures must contain in them much that is worthy of publication. It would be a subject of deep regret should the best thoughts of such a man be lost; and it seems desirable that at any rate a selection of the most striking of them should be given to the world, along with a reprint of his occasional publications, and a brief memorial of their accomplished author. In the year 1791, Dr. Hardy published a sermon on "The Benevolence of the Christian Spirit." This sermon was preached before the society for the benefit of the sons of the clergy of the Church of Scotland, —a society in the formation and management of which he took an active part. In 1793, he published an elaborate and eloquent tract entitled "The Patriot. Addressed to the people in the present state of affairs in Britain and in France," which went through more than one impression. The sermon on "The Progress of the Christian Religion," was the anniversary sermon for the Society in Scotland for propagating Christian knowledge, in 1793, and was published in the succeeding year. In 1793 he was elected moderator of the General Assembly, and at its meeting in 1794 he preached a most eloquent sermon on "The Importance of Religion to National Prosperity," which was published. There is also another of his sermons published, in the fourth volume of the Scottish Preacher, "On the Resurrection of Jesus," preached in the High church, after the celebration of the Lord's supper, in March 1785, a very favourable specimen of his rhetorical powers. In the year 1796 his health gave way; the symptoms of deep-seated pulmonary complaint manifested themselves, and he found it necessary to retire into the country, and spend the summer on a small estate which had been left him in the parish of Mid-Calder. His complaint became confirmed phthisis, and after lingering under it for nearly two years, he died in November 1798, in the 50th year of his age. The impression produced by reading Dr. Hardy's few publications is that in philosophical spirit he was not inferior to any of his contemporaries in the Scottish church, not excepting the deservedly celebrated Principal Robertson, and that in genius he was perhaps superior to them all. The testimony of Sir Henry Moncreiff is not liable to the suspicion of partiality, for Dr. Hardy and he belonged

to different parties of the church, and it is equally honourable to him who gave it and to him of whom it is given. "The late Dr. Hardy of Edinburgh, the distinguished Professor of Church History in the university, and one of the ministers of the city, whose talents were equal to any situation in his profession, but who, like his respectable father, was taken from the world in the middle of life, when his faculties were in full vigour; before he had been able to do more than give a few detached specimens of his literary and professional abilities; but not before he had convinced his contemporaries of the extent of capacity, discernment and integrity, which was lost by his death." *

It is scarcely needful to remark that the Discourse which follows is, in the Editor's judgment, doctrinally defective, and the causes of the progress of Christianity during the primitive age, and of its subsequent retardation, are but impartially stated in it. The depths of this subject in neither of its aspects can be reached, without distinct reference to the atoning sacrifice of Christ—the influence of the Holy Spirit—and the state of human nature which makes that atonement and influence requisite. The merits of the Tract, however, both in thought and expression, are of a very high order; and no person capable of appreciating these will doubt of its claim to a place in this Collection.

* Life of Dr. Erskine, page 187. For the materials of this brief notice, I have been indebted to the only surviving member of Dr. Hardy's family.

THE

PROGRESS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

HEBREWS ii. 8.—“But now we see not yet all things put under him.”

THE idea of an universal religion is liberal and great. It was not found among the polished nations of antiquity; it was not even a topic of speculation in the philosophic schools: it was preserved, however, where least of all it might have been expected, in the treasures of the sanctuary, among a people who inhabited the mountains of Palestine. That people were distinguished by the pride of exclusive privilege, rather than by any tendency to liberality of sentiment; and their laws, government, and worship, were visibly calculated to prevent all religious communion with other nations. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, imagined that the divine favour, like the covenant of peculiarity, did not extend beyond the line in which the blood of the patriarchs flowed; yet they held in their hands the oracles repeated from heaven to each of these men, that “in their seed should all the families of the earth be blessed.”

The prophets, who in succession foretold the advent of the Messiah, exhibited him as the head of an universal religion. In the prophetic page, he is introduced laying his claim to this character, as assigned to him by the will of God: “I will declare the decree, The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” The very title of the SON, in various instances in holy writ, implies the extent of the grant, as comprehending the whole human

race, according to the plenitude of power, in contradistinction to the powers both of the angels and of the prophets, who were as servants under limited commissions, possessing authority over a part only of the household. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" "God spake to the fathers by the prophets, but to us he has spoken by his *Son*, whom he hath appointed heir of all things."

The unbounded success of the Messiah is expressed in such terms as these: "Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far.—Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth.—Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.—He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles. And in every place incense shall be offered to my name and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts," Isa. xlix. 5, 6; xlii. 1, 4. Mal. i. 11.

The prophets whom God inspired to foretell the universal religion, gave those consistent assurances on this great subject which were suitable to the wisdom of the ways of Providence; for they showed that the new covenant should be distinguished from the old in its substance, as well as in its extent; that the law of God should be written in the heart, and the sceptre of his kingdom a sceptre of righteousness. The institutions of the Mosaic law were absolutely incapable of an universal establishment. Sacrifices limited to a single temple; the sanctity of places; a burdensome ritual; a sacerdotal tribe; an high priest on earth; these, and many other arrangements in that provisional system, were not only incompatible with general religious union, but, as Paul reasoned

irresistibly, in proof of their necessary abolition under an universal religion, the peculiarities of the Mosaic economy were actually framed and intended to exclude the Gentiles while that system should stand. This law of commandments contained in ordinances, was a handwriting against them, an edict of separation limiting the covenant to a few, which was rescinded and nailed to the cross, when the Messiah was cut off, and "confirmed the covenant with many."

The religion of nature was the first universal dispensation, simple in its characters, holy in its laws, and accommodated to every situation of man upon the earth. It had been gradually corrupted by various superstitions, and its state had become hopeless; for the superstitions had been confirmed and entailed by power and craft in every age. The complaint of nature went up in memorial before God; and Christianity, the second universal dispensation, was introduced in the fulness of time. The gospel interpreted the handwriting on the heart, restored the original record in its beauty, and added new illustrations of the grace of God and of the duty of man; while it possessed every requisite for obtaining that reception among the nations which the oracles of God had foretold.

The apostle, who wrote to the Hebrews about thirty-five years after the ascension of Christ, had seen a part of the scene which the prophets had sketched filled up by the hand of Providence. Jesus, who had been made lower than the angels for a little, had been crowned with glory and honour; his religion had been embraced by thousands and tens of thousands in Asia, in Africa, and in Europe; it was advancing with a rapidity which was astonishing and delightful; every thing seemed to presage its unlimited success, though the short period which had as yet elapsed had not afforded time for the completion of its victories. "But now we see not yet all things put under him." Seventeen hundred years more have been numbered to the human race, and many generations of men have passed in succession over the scene of time, and gone down into the grave; and now we see not yet all things put under Christ. For some ages after the death of his apostles, the religion of Jesus continued to prosper and to prevail; it then declined from its purity, and its

progress was suddenly suspended. Long it lay enfeebled and degraded under the yoke of corruption, imposed by the same means, and fastened upon it by the same hands which had ruined natural religion. Within these three centuries it has been gradually recovering its pure and simple honours, but has not yet been able to go forth to make new conquests among the heathen.

Let us reverently inquire into these things, and consider,

I. The causes of the success of Christianity in the first ages.

II. The causes of the suspension of its progress.

III. The present aspect of the Christian world.

I. We are to consider the causes of the success of Christianity in the first ages.

During the age of the apostles, the truth and authority of the Christian dispensation were evinced to the world by extraordinary proofs. Miraculous works were performed under the ministry of the teachers; the sick were healed, the knowledge of languages was instantaneously conveyed, and by various other gifts of the Spirit an external evidence attended and sustained the progress of the faith. These palpable characters of the divine interposition were necessary in the first introduction of the great cause upon earth, and they were to go into the record of the New Testament, ascertained by the testimony of apostles and martyrs, for the instruction of future ages. But the miraculous powers could not be permitted to attend Christianity through the whole of its progress; nor even to continue through any long course of time, consistently with the order of providence in the moral government of mankind. The exact time of the cessation of these powers cannot now be fixed. But there remains no good evidence of any one specific miracle within the Christian church later than the period of the fall of Jerusalem. For ages after that event, however, the religion of Jesus continued to make a rapid and decisive progress among the nations; and that it did make this progress without the presence of miraculous attestations, furnishes an experimental proof, that the means of the propagation of Christianity are attainable at all times under ordinary providence; that the same causes which in the second and third centuries carried "righteousness unto victory," would, if fairly brought into

operation, produce the like effects in any other age ; and that if the progress of the gospel has been obstructed, and is still obstructed, it must be owing to the church itself presenting a different aspect to the heathen, from that which it exhibited in the days of its power.

The leading cause of the success of the gospel in the early ages was the essential excellence of the system. The apostle Paul, who was deeply sensible of the inherent strength of Christianity, as founded in its permanent characters, abstracted from the miraculous gifts which suited only its infant condition, observed, that when the extraordinary communications of prophecy, of tongues, and of knowledge, should cease and vanish away, there should still remain the unalterable glories of Christianity, its faith, its hope, its charity ; that these belong to the church in its maturity, "when that which is perfect is come ;" and that of these charity is the greatest.

When the Christians reasoned with the heathens on the vanity of polytheism and idolatry ; and when in opposition to the prejudices of the popular superstition, they declared the truth in its native simplicity, their success was certain ; they prevailed through the obvious goodness of their cause. The doctrine of the gospel beaming its pure light on the understanding, produced immediate and steady conviction : the facts of the New Testament acting upon the heart, created an interest which was fervent and effective ; while the sound morality of the whole system impressed on the conscience the direct and instant sense of obligation.

In conferences between the subjects of the Pagan system and the followers of the new religion, the Christian advocate stood on the strong ground of nature, when he testified the first and most sublime truth in the universe, "God is one, he is holy, he is good." The moment that this primitive doctrine was restored to the mind of men, and fully understood and embraced, heathenism fell to pieces ; the profligate visions of Olympus disappeared ; superstition was left utterly defenceless ; the hearer was already almost persuaded to become a Christian ; and he was altogether persuaded, as soon as he understood the religion in its body and spirit, and perceived its uniform reference to the moral character of the Eternal One.

Christianity as a scheme of doctrine declares, among other great and attractive principles, that God has made of one blood all the nations; that they are alike related to him the great Parent in his family of mankind; that he dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with gifts or sacrifices, as though he needed anything; but is served with piety and humanity, and worshipped in spirit and in truth: that his providence is particular and universal; that his cares and influence extend to the spirits of men, as well as to their outward condition; that he has looked with compassion on his offspring, distressed and toiling amidst ignorance, sorrow, sin, and death; that Jesus Christ is come from God, sent according to the riches of divine grace, to enlighten, to save, and to bless mankind; that God, according to his infinite wisdom, in restoring his sons, perfected the Leader of their deliverance by sufferings, and has now exalted him as a Prince and a Saviour, to give them repentance and the remission of sins; that this life is a state of probation; that after death is the judgment, in which will be peculiarly respected, our benignity and mercy, our probity and holiness in the conduct of life, and our progress in religious attainments, corresponding to the advantages which we have enjoyed.

Christianity, as a declaration of facts, shows the incarnation of the Saviour in humility; his life perfect in sanctity and eminent in goodness; his affection to his friends, his compassion to his enemies, his rejection of all earthly honours, his avoiding both alliance and hostility with political systems, his disclaiming on the part of his followers any power civil or spiritual, as attached either to the profession of Christianity or to the office of teachers of his religion; his requiring from his followers a strictness of principle, which should never be overcome of evil; his own unalterable fidelity amidst reproach, persecution, and the pains of death; his resurrection in power; his ascension in glory. These are the historical characters of the grand interposition: they are interesting, and they are also credible; for to the eye of reason and reflection they appear to be most eminently calculated to introduce with advantage a dispensation of piety and virtue, and to unite mankind in a holy and catholic church.

Christianity as an institute of the divine law speaks home

to the natural conscience ; it sets at nought the whole artifice of superstition, the folly or the fraud by which the world has been held in bondage ; the contrivances to insure the soul without the sacrifices of its vices ; the pageantry, the formalities, or the bribery by which men have sought to please God without the practice of virtue, and to escape from punishment, without the trouble of repentance unto newness of life. Christianity declares that virtue is the law of God ; that this is his will, even our sanctification ; that as God is holy, we ought to be holy ; and that as he is good, we ought to conform to his image in kindness, forbearance, mercy, even in that charity which is the genuine transcript of the Father's goodness, and which is enthroned in the Christian dispensation above faith and hope. These views of religious obligation claim the assent of the conscience. Men feel the power of the truth in this case from the first moment, and before they have courage to own their convictions, or have got any complete victory over their prejudices. And this whole scheme of doctrines, facts, and laws, even Christianity as it was spoken by the Lord and confirmed to us by them that heard him, is calculated for universal reception as the religion of the human race. It has nothing local, nothing exclusive, no holy places, no stated fasts or festivals, no laborious ritual, no sacerdotal domination, no altar, no bloodshed but that of its Founder and his witnesses, no special accommodation to partiular forms of government or modes of life. In all its parts it alike applies to the families of the simple hunters in the wilderness, of the shepherds on their mountains, of the polished citizen, of the freeman. and the slave.

We have here to meet a prejudice which has been often entertained on this subject, that some considerable progress in civilization is previously necessary to prepare a people for the reception of Christianity. You must first make them men, say the patrons of this opinion, before you think of making them Christians. You must teach them to live in fixed habitations, to associate in villages, to cultivate the soil, and then you may hope that they will hear and understand when you unfold the sublime principles of the gospel. This opinion has been supported by the abilities of a prelate, who, whether defending

the legation of Moses or discussing the Christian doctrine, scorned to avail himself of the advantage of ground, but generally made the forlorn hope his option.

The opinion itself supposes a wider difference between the understanding of the man of the woods and the man of the city than what does in fact take place; and it supposes the gospel to be something more intricate than any of the words of Christ seem to imply. It opposes the claim of Christianity to be an universal religion, considering it as adapted to mankind in some situations, but not in all; and it would place a final bar in the way of our hopes of any success to our religion on the side of Tartary and America, where the reluctance of the people to a stationary life is a part of the national character. That in the case of the Americans, a change of life to fixed habitations, to agriculture, to civilization and the arts, would be a matter of immense benefit to the people themselves, is undoubted: it is indeed the only expedient which can save the whole old nations of the Continent from that extermination which they are threatened by the European colonists. But the aid of Christianity seems to be necessary to facilitate this change of situation to civil life, instead of depending for its own reception on the previous accomplishment of this change. Christianity does not require any specific alterations to be made in the regulations of civil or political society; but its spirit is propitious to all good works, it mitigates the tempers of men, it unites them in worship, in humanity, and in love, and is thus highly favourable to civilization, and to the essential improvement of the nations.

Shall it be said that the Indian wanderer has not a comprehension equal to the admission of the Christian doctrine? This is the current apology for the failure of the missions, but is not the real truth of the case.—The human mind is not in any country below the reach of discipline and religious instruction. The American Indian, the Pacific islander, and the African Negro are shrewd men, whose intellectual capacity will not suffer in the comparison with the uneducated classes of people on the Continent of Europe. Indeed the popular speculation on national diversities of character, as fixed appearances in the human species, and the classification of intellects, according either to physical causes or modes of

living, is at best but hypothesis ; and in the degree to which it has been sometimes carried, is extravagant hypothesis and presumption. The savage people now mentioned possess already the sublime doctrines on which Christianity is reared. They acknowledge the great Spirit, and adore him with humble prostration ; and they trust that they shall again meet their friends and companions in the world of spirits. With so much true religion they have almost no superstition ; and have little to unlearn except in some moral habits, which Christianity would correct and reform. What is there then in the state of these people which should wholly obstruct their reception of the truth ? Were the poor of Syria and Palestine, to whom Christ and his apostles preached the gospel, so much superior in mental accomplishments to the sagacious Indian and the honest Negro ? This will not satisfy an impartial inquirer, who knows the historical facts, and who knows further how plain and simple, and how happily adapted to the comprehension of mankind at large, the Christian doctrine is in its substance, even in all that is necessary to salvation. It certainly does not require any previous proficiency in arts and sciences, to understand that God is good, and to love him ; to own Jesus Christ as a spiritual Prince and Saviour ; to love one another ; to be harmless, and patient, and gentle ; to have pure thoughts and kind affections ; and in fine, to receive the whole inheritance of faith, hope, and charity. "I thank thee, O Father," said our Lord, "that those things which have been hid from the wise and prudent are now revealed unto babes." It is true, that the full elucidation of Christian theology is a work for the scholar and philosopher, and that the most profound research into this subject will be repaid with new and glorious views of the riches of divine grace, and of the treasures of the gospel ; but the great lines of the Christian dispensation are plain and obvious. It is also true, that if the teachers of Christianity themselves mistake their subject, which is a possible case, under the seduction of any false philosophy ; if they go to the Mississippi, or to the Gambia, with a system of metaphysics in their hands, instead of the rational and attractive theology of the New Testament, they will find that the natives are indeed utterly unprepared to attend to the jargon which is offered

to them for religion, and that it is absolutely impossible to make converts to a scheme of hard words, nice distinctions, and the quirks which European divines have been accustomed to employ in their scholastic or synodical litigations.

The essential excellence of the Christian religion was the first and leading cause of its success in the early ages; it was supported and justified before the heathen by the lives of the Christians, and by the character and conduct of the teachers. The lives of the early Christians formed an experimental argument in favour of their religious principles; and a most interesting argument it must have been, when, even in the third century, the writers in defence of Christianity were able to lay their appeal to the records of the Roman tribunals in support of their assertion, that no Christian had ever been brought before the imperial judges charged with any crime except his religion. To such innocence in civil life the Christians added the most cordial attachment to each other, proved by the daily practice of good works. This however was what might have been expected in a set of men who were as yet the minority in the ranks of society, and who were treated with harshness and indignity by the ruling powers: and their brotherly kindness within the pale of the church is less surprising than their charity to all other men. The principle of benevolence, which they learned among the earliest and the most sacred lessons in the school of Christ, led them to look upon every man as a neighbour, even though a pagan or an infidel. The zeal for good works which glowed in their bosoms rendered them all ready instructors of others, and advocates for their religion amidst their civil transactions with the heathen. The business of extending the progress of the gospel was not left merely to a few ecclesiastical missionaries, but was the object of the faithful at large, as far as the influence and connections of each individual respectively extended.

The presbyters of the church, the public teachers, were indeed peculiarly active in advancing the progress of the great cause, and the obvious characters of their ministry were favourable to their success. They had no selfish purposes to serve, no professional ambition to be gratified, by extending the bounds of ecclesiastical dominion; they made

no invasion on the rights of the people, no association of the idea of conversion to Christianity with that of subjection to a new sacerdotal authority in all the points of opinion, discipline, and worship. The Christian teachers were as humble in spirit as they were zealous of good works; they reasoned on the subject of their message with calmness, good temper, and kind affection: with nothing of that pride of system which substitutes arrogance for reasoning; which commands where it ought to persuade; and which, in the impatience of opposition, calls for fire from heaven to consume the gainsayers, instead of acquainting them with the spirit of Him who came not to destroy but to save.

Christianity, then, as it was tendered to men in the early ages, could not fail of success. At length, however, it incurred a great and lasting check.—We are now to consider,

II. The causes of the suspension of its progress.—The countenance of the imperial government, which the church obtained in the reign of Constantine, was naturally calculated to promote, instead of obstructing, the progress of the faith. That great revolution, however, by which the church was brought forward from persecution and affliction to victory and triumph, required above all things to have been followed out in the exercise of prudence, and with the most delicate and scrupulous attention to those principles by which Christ and his apostles had regulated the first movements in the great cause. Unhappily the early Christian emperors departed alike from prudence and from evangelical principle in their public measures relative to Christianity. These measures had three objects: To oblige their heathen subjects to become Christians; to oblige all the Christians to hold the same opinions in speculative subjects; and to increase the power of the clergy.

The continued pursuit of these ends for several reigns produced effects which were decisive and fatal. The pagans, perceiving that Christianity was become the road to preferment, and finding themselves first subjected to disabilities, and afterwards to penalties, for continuing to worship the gods of their ancestors, abandoned their profession, and flocked into the church by hundreds and by thousands. Their conversion was nominal, and was not founded on con-

viction; they retained the prejudices of their superstition unsubdued, instead of throwing them down at the foot of the cross. They could not see the kingdom of God in its proper character, for they were not born again in the Spirit of truth; they came not as little children under the tuition of Christ; they introduced into the church itself the essential principles of paganism; by their numbers they gave to those principles a footing which was permanent, and which a great part of Christendom has not even yet been able to remove.

The terrible influx of the pagans, upon the conversion of the court, corrupted the church; and the resolution of the emperors to have but one religion among their subjects, brought unspeakable detriment to the cause which they meant to support. The other two objects of the imperial policy were not more fortunate in the event; for, in endeavouring by the secular arm to compel all the Christians to entertain the same speculative opinions on the questions then debated, the sovereigns at once turned free discussion into controversy and strife; they inflamed, instead of extinguishing, party spirit; they formally divided the church into sects; they entailed the disputes of their own times as an inheritance of sorrow to posterity, and wrote *intolerance* over the portal of the house of God.

The elevation of the clergy to *power*, by which the teachers of the humble religion of Jesus were transformed into an ambitious priesthood, was the creation of a formidable support to any superstitions which might find access to the church, and at the same time an effectual clog to prevent the progress of the Christian faith in new regions. Thus, in consequence of fatal indiscretion in the measures of the court, and of a system of policy erroneous in principle, Christianity suffered infinitely more mischief from Constantine, than it had done from Diocletian; and received wounds from the hands of Theodosius, such as Julian could never have inflicted.

The mode of corruption which Christianity experienced, during its period of decline in the fourth and fifth centuries, consisted partly in an extension of the ritual, which transformed the religion in its obvious characters from the

discipline of the heart, to a pitiful exhibition of gestures, forms, and pageantry; and partly in the introduction of dark theories imported from the academies of the Egyptian sophists, and mixed with the doctrine of the gospel, as alloy and dross, debasing the gold of the sanctuary. By the extended ritual and the mysticism together, the beauty and authority of religion as a practical rule was lost, the actual redemption from vice, and the improvement of men individually in piety and holiness, for which the Lord of the Christians had laboured and bled, were in effect set aside, and supplanted by new contrivances which were adopted as substitutes for eternal virtue. From all this it followed, that to tender to a new nation the religion as now altered in substance, was to offer something else than that which the experience of three centuries had proved to be calculated for success; it was to offer something, which having no foundation in human nature, no support from right reason, no accommodation to the general exigencies of the human race, could not succeed; of course it did not succeed; men would not exchange for it the opinions and rites of their fathers, and their reluctance is in no degree surprising.

The present argument places us on strong ground to meet a prejudice by which many speculative and sagacious men have been misled. It is, that superstition is necessary in human life; that simple and rational religion cannot attract and fix the bulk of mankind; that either pageantry or mysticism, or both, must be employed to keep religion afloat; and, that the people must in some degree be deceived for their good.

If these maxims were well founded, they would present a more humiliating view of the nature of man than any other principles in the philosophy of our species, for they imply that prejudice and folly are actually to be depended on as the guides of human life, and not truth and reason.

Now, it is to be observed, that the plan of Jesus Christ for gaining and keeping the people, proceeded on principles directly opposite to these. His doctrine, in the simple majesty of truth, was without any addition or fictitious embellishment revealed unto babes; it was unfolded by degrees indeed, as they were able to bear it; but in no case was it

contaminated by the smallest particle of superstition, folly, or deception. The entire fairness of the gospel dispensation, as one doctrine given alike to the wise and the simple, was its character, announced in prophecy, in opposition to the double doctrine of the philosophic schools; and to this character Jesus appealed: "Go and show John," said he, "the things which ye see and hear;—the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and *to the poor the gospel is preached.*"

We have now seen, that the additions of superstition and mystery, which were made to the Christian doctrine in the fourth and fifth centuries, instead of rendering it more fit to attract the affections of mankind, as the priests vainly and ignorantly imagined, arrested its progress, affected the body of the church as with a mortal palsy, and left mankind to wonder as much at its imbecility after that period, as they had admired its strength before it was thus diseased.

The removal of the prejudices now under discussion is a matter of consequence to mankind. I mean therefore farther to expose it by stating, that in various ages and countries the men who have endeavoured to simplify religion, and to throw off superstition, have been supported by the multitude, while there is no instance in which the people have freely consented to exchange a simple faith for a complicated and superstitious ritual. It is only by gradual steps that superstition has ever gained ground; it is an unnatural state of the human mind: men have been cheated into superstition. So far from being cherished by the people for its own sake, they have on every opportunity manifested the eagerness of impatience to throw it off; and unless when held back by the force of the civil arm, they have flocked around every reformer who would venture to pronounce that their superstition was all folly, and who would treat them as reasonable creatures, by uttering a few plain truths, of which their own understandings and consciences could form a judgment.

When Zoroaster undertook to reform the religion of Persia, and, in opposition to the leaders of the Magi, restored to the popular faith the doctrine of the Eternal One, the Source of existence and of glory, the Superior of the Angel of Good

and the Angel of Evil, the joint ministers of Providence; when he restricted the worship of his followers to the good beings only, and taught that the dead should be judged in equity, instead of being staked in the lottery of fate according to the predominance of the good or the evil being; he had nothing to support him but the superiority of his system in its plainer accommodation to the unsophisticated dictates of the mind; yet he was successful, and the effects of his reformation are not to this day wholly lost in Persia.

When Confucius, in whose family the patriarchial traditions had fortunately been preserved in considerable purity, perceived with sorrow the degeneracy of China, he spoke to his countrymen as a philosopher and a reformer; he claimed no divine commission; he declared that his doctrine was not his own, but that of the ancients, handed down by tradition: he was listened to with avidity wherever he went; whole provinces declared their conversion; and his system, which consisted in the simple worship of the God of heaven, and the practice of moral virtue, became predominant for ages in the empire.

Let us attend to the facts in the Christian history which naturally bear respect to the same argument. During the long period in which superstition had fixed its throne on the ruins of Christianity before the Reformation, the people felt the weight of their oppression; they groaned under it, though they durst not complain; they turned a wishful eye on every side, looking for deliverance. Eagerly did they listen to every voice which ventured to speak of reason and spiritual liberty, and were ready to throw down their burdens and to obey the call which accorded with the genuine tones of nature. The Waldenses in Italy and Spain, the Albigenses in France, the followers of Huss in Germany, and of Wickliffe in England, all of whom aimed at the rejection of superstition, and the restoration of the truth in simplicity, were on popular ground; they possessed the respect and received the blessings of the people in the ages and countries in which they appeared; they failed merely because they were borne down by force, and massacred by the troops which the interested patrons of superstition armed against them. The truth had foul play, otherwise it would have prevailed. The Christian

people had been at first cheated into superstition, and they were held in it only by fraud and by force.

The Reformation, for which the people had groaned for ages, was at last brought forward with success in Germany and in Switzerland. The cause was popular beyond precedent; from province to province, and from kingdom to kingdom, it spread its influence like the sunbeams of morning after a long night of gloom. From the dreams of delusion and terror, the Christian man awoke, he gave thanks unto God who had said, "Let there be light."

The Reformation, which, spurning superstition, reverted to the simplicity of the gospel in faith and worship, was for that very reason gladly embraced by the people; mankind naturally love the plain truth, and in their hearts despise the mystical chicane, or the ceremonial evolutions by which they are enslaved. The Reformers were revered as the friends of the human race. Their success was great; and if the cause had been left to the fair decision of mankind individually, and to the effect of free discussion, all Europe would have regenerated its creed and its worship in the course of a few years; but there were various interests necessarily confederated and arrayed against it. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians of the age, with the chief priests and scribes, these trusty battalions which compose the standing army of spiritual usurpation, resisted its progress from obvious motives. It was force alone exerted or menaced against the people which checked their growing inclination, prevented the general success, and restricted the Reformation to a few countries of Europe.

From the whole deduction which has now been made, it appears, that superstition is useless; that truth and reason are alone to be depended on in giving a regular and safe determination to human actions; and that the idea of managing mankind by means of prejudices and by arts of deception is false philosophy, as unwise as it is immoral.

That superstition, when admitted in any extent within the Christian church, must necessarily produce the consequence of arresting the progress of the gospel, admits of being proved *a priori*, from the genius of the doctrine of the New Testa-

ment, without the induction which ecclesiastical history affords.

The plain and open spirit of the Christian system, the application to the natural impressions and to the good sense of mankind, which was invariably made by our Lord and his apostles, were essential circumstances (as has been already shown) of the universal character attributed to the religion in its original fabric. Besides the considerations which show the impossibility of rendering any mode of superstition universal, it is remarkable that precautions were taken in the very first arrangements of the Christian system, to impede its progress under the contingent circumstance of its corruption, and to prevent the visible church from going beyond the bounds of the real church, which is according to simplicity and truth. The cares of our Lord to secure this object, account for a striking circumstance in his history, a shyness to admit among his followers many who offered to share his fortunes. It was because they only wished to share his fortunes in the expected dominion, and not to follow him in his humility and contempt of the world, that he declined their attendance until they should come to him upon his own terms. The conduct of Providence towards the Jewish nation, in various parts of the New Testament history, manifests an unremitted attention to the same principle; that the cause should be preserved pure, at least in its progress; and that it should not be tendered to the Gentiles mixed with any portion of Jewish prejudice or of useless ceremonies.

The care of Providence has been exerted over the Christian church in all ages to the same purpose. Men may by degrees corrupt Christianity where it is, but they shall not propagate it in this state; they shall not spread error over the earth in the name of Christ; they shall not give to the Gentiles an institute of pageantry and mysticism, calling it Christianity; they may offer it if they will, but Providence in its general conduct shows that the Gentiles will not accept it.

The only exceptions which appear in history to these observations, occurred in some of the northern nations of Europe to whom the religion reached after the growth of the corruption; but there were in these cases such strong peculiarities

of situation as fully account for the facts, without weakening the force of the general rule, which stands confirmed by the stated experience of the world.

Among the circumstances of the grand corruption which have been most visibly calculated to obstruct the progress of the faith in new lands, considerable stress is to be laid on the errors and vices of the priests, especially in the Roman Catholic system. They have erred in laying claims to power and revenue on divine right, and in so connecting Christianity with professional ambition as to excite in the civil rulers of the unconverted nations a reasonable jealousy, and an alarm at the high demands of a body of ecclesiastical leaders, lords of the people's faith, by whose confederated hostility the state might be endangered, or whose alliance it might be reduced to solicit. The teachers have further erred against the success of the great cause, in their strife of opinions among themselves, when in their impatience of contradiction they have arrayed their anathemas as the guards of abstract propositions, and have given a sword instead of peace to the earth. Too often in various ages have they been seen to pass their own uncharitableness for religious principle; to consecrate in the name of God the rancour and antipathies which have been inspired by the jealousy of dominion and the pride of party; and to exhibit themselves to the world as the patrons of intolerance. Among the Christian priests, in defiance of the orders, of the tears, and of the blood of their Master, was that foul spirit generated; and in their councils it was nursed. They have polluted the sanctuary by human sacrifices, and still wishing to inflict more than temporal vengeance, they have wrought a fatal prejudice against the cause of the Redeemer, by pretending to exclude from eternal mercy the whole body of heathens, heretics, and the members of every rival church and sect; by scattering curses around them where they were commanded to bless; and giving the heathens room to suspect that the Christian system itself is a gloomy, wrathful, and vindictive scheme, instead of a covenant of grace.

III. Let us consider the present aspect of the Christian world.—Although a serious man, in meditating on the state of the church on earth, will see many things to deplore, yet

when he takes into view the leading features of the times, he will be able to discern the causes in their full operation, which seem destined to bring forward the season of ultimate success to the Christian religion.

1. Learning is wholly and exclusively in the possession of the Christian nations. It revived among them after the long darkness of the middle ages; it taught the Reformers to fulfil and to defend their work; and learning in its turn derived from the Reformation an established footing in Europe, through the ardour and the freedom of inquiry which that great event nourished in the human mind. For above two centuries and a half it has advanced with a rapidity which has been uniformly accelerated; it has not only added splendour to the kingdoms of the Reformation, but has made an impression upon the regions of popery, where its effects must and will be decisive in the subversion of that superstition. Learning gives to the Christian nations a marked superiority of character which the heathen must feel and respect; it forms the means by which Christianity itself becomes better understood, by which it is separated from the follies which have been attached to it, and by which the genuine beauty of scripture is unfolded to the world.

2. The Christians are improving in the article of forbearance. The tempers of men, in respect to religious differences, are mitigated. The spirit of persecution, the demon of intolerance, which is the Man of Sin, is enfeebled. God grant that it may never again obtain power to stain the countenance of the blessed Jesus, to expose him in a purple robe, and to put him to open shame. Would to God we could say, that in this nation at least, favoured as it has been of heaven, the spirit of Antichrist is extinct. But our lips must here be closed, under the humiliating recollection of the scenes of violence which were exhibited in London and in Edinburgh in the year 1780, by persons pretending to support the Protestant interest, even while they were borrowing from Popery its worst attribute, incurring the guilt of persecution, and tarnishing the best honours of the Reformation. "How long, O Lord, holy and true, shall the image of the beast yet speak? and has its deadly wound been healed?" Christianity has received a new affront, and we must yet blush in

silence under the recent recollection of the scenes at Birmingham and its neighbourhood within these two years, where fierce incendiaries assumed the character of Churchmen, and abused the venerable fabric of the English establishment, by pretending that its honour and interest were their motives for applying firebrands to the houses and property of the Dissenters. This is indeed sacrilege; to rob the church, not of its silver, its gold, or its vestments; but to rob the church of its honour and glory, and of the charter of its Christianity, by committing violence and persecution in its name.

Notwithstanding some instances such as these now mentioned, by which it appears that the old leaven is not wholly put away, it is certain that in respect of forbearance there is a sensible improvement of the Christian world; and there is reason to hope that the time is not far distant when there shall be no more suffering for conscience' sake, and when men shall not hurt nor destroy in the holy mountain of God.

3. The commerce of the world is in the hands of the Christian nations. The commercial system in modern times has risen to a magnitude which is without precedent in the history of human affairs. It is a new operative power introduced into the scheme of providence, and is obviously capable of producing great effects. Under the influence of this system, the Christians traverse every sea, visit every island, and explore every continent. No people nor tribe are so obscure as not to be in some degree affected by their operations, or brought within the sphere of their influence. The Christians themselves are stationed in numbers on every shore, and posted near the heathen in all his dwellings.

The preparations are visibly in forwardness; they are advanced; it requires only that the Christians should do their duty, and the great work will be accomplished.

Wherefore then is nothing done? Attempts have been often made both by Catholics and by Protestants, every one of which has totally failed, and ended in nothing. The Hindoo and Chinese, in the bosom of civilization, have been as inflexible to the efforts of a thousand missionaries, as the African or American. The Catholics have carried the scheme of missions to the greatest extent, they have been indefatigable in the work, and have turned their attention to every

land ; never was so much labour lost as in this case. Why will not the nations listen ? Because God has given reason to them all. Will the American Indian obey the stranger who bids him give up his simple adoration of the great Spirit, to repeat words in an unknown tongue before a picture or over a string of beads ?—Will the Chinese renounce the institutions of Confucius, to commit his soul and conscience to the custody of an Italian Priest and his emissaries, and give up his understanding to be confounded with fictitious duties and fictitious sins ?—Will the Hindoo abandon the Divine Being, whom he reveres under the threefold character of the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer, to bow the knee to St. Antony, St. Francis, and St. Dominic ; to submit to a fantastic ritual addressed to a whole host of dead men and women of the western nations ? The undertaking of these missionaries is desperate in its own nature ; it cannot succeed anywhere.

The missions from the Protestant churches present a different aspect. They reject the whole apparatus on which the Catholics lay the stress of religion, yet neither have they succeeded at all. The fact must not be disguised, they have totally failed. For this there may be various reasons. Perhaps the missionaries are incapable men ; perhaps they teach on a different principle from that which marked Christian instruction in the days of its progress ; perhaps it is their object to procure followers to a sect, instead of converts to a religion ; mistaking the peculiarities of their own party, whatever it is, for the essence of Christianity, and teaching these as the leading objects of their mission. If these things are so, if they deliver anything local, partial, and unreasonable, or produce any of the dark and intricate theories of scholastic divinity, instead of the plain doctrine of the New Testament, they must fail.

Christianity, that it may advance, must be preserved in its characters of universality ; we may add, that it must also be seen in its regenerating power ; and that, in this respect, we can trace a decisive obstacle to the success of the missions, in the vices of the Christian people. Let the missionary show with both understanding and fervour, that Christianity teaches men to live soberly in the world ; is he likely to be

credited, when the Indian can reply, that the men of his nation were temperate until the Christians came to corrupt them; that these strangers have brought among them the means and the habits of intemperance, and are profligate in their manners beyond any example known in savage life? Would the teacher show that the Christian law requires men to live godly in the world; the pagan will here also be incredulous; he sees the Europeans whom the business of war or of commerce has brought upon his coast, living without God in the world, disregarding religious ordinances, and only using the name of God in cursing and profanity. Let the missionary also whisper, that Christianity teaches men to live righteously in the world; but where has he the face to say so? Is it to the tribes of America, where the first steps of the Europeans were marked with rapine and bloodshed; where, by a great and regular system of unrighteousness, the natives are yearly robbed of fresh tracts of their land, and are driven from valley to valley, and from river to river; and where the white men in every transaction study to cheat their red brethren, the men of the woods? Is it in Africa that the missionary would speak of righteousness as the law of the Christians? perhaps the native might reply: "When I was a child, I heard of the Christians, I have known them in riper years, and my opinion of their principles is not likely to alter; for from them my heart received its first wound, and now they have broken it. My father was bringing water to us from the brook when the Christians fell upon him. They sprung from the thicket, like the tiger on its prey; they beat him to the ground with clubs, they chained him down in a canoe, and bore him off into slavery. In my youth they made me drink of affliction, but now in my age its waters have overwhelmed me. I was at a distance from my home, when the Christians and their menhunters but two moons ago made war as they call it, in our valley; at the dead of night they beset the village, they set fire to the houses, they seized the flying families; and among the rest, my wife, my only son, and my infant daughter were carried off, and are now on the ocean, fastened to bolts of iron in your ships, never to know rest or peace until the grave shall become their refuge from the Christians. Christians, your ships are red

with innocent blood; ye make merchandise of the souls of men; your crimes hold Africa in ruins; the broken families of its natives appeal to God against you; it is you who destroy our morals and our comfort together; it is you who spread treachery, cruelty, despair and heartbreak over a whole continent. Until the Christians abandon this monstrous system of outrage. Africa will never become Christian."

The manners of the Christians at large have an essential connection with the credit and success of Christianity in the world. A great work is to be done before it can go further; the general reformation of the Christians themselves. Vice and superstition must fall; there must be a turning from sin to righteousness, and also a turning from darkness to light.

To effect an improvement in the morals of the Christians at large, corresponding to the improvements which they have made and are daily making in science, literature, and arts, may seem to be a problem of peculiar difficulty; it is so no doubt, but it is not desperate. We know that at one period Christians did adorn their doctrine, and in general lived as became them. The work is possible then; the New Testament is still as capable as ever to display its regenerating power; and the Spirit in the New Testament has shown us that it shall display this power, and shall then prevail. For the approach of that season means are to be used: parents may do much; teachers of youth may work with benefit; ministers of religion may unfold the Scriptures in their genuine and effective character; civil rulers may encourage the progress of liberal knowledge, or at least permit mankind to improve.

The removal of superstition, which must either precede or attend any moral improvements in the Christian world, is to be conducted with delicacy and wisdom, though it is certain that it may be effected completely and with entire safety, as well as with infinite benefit in the result, provided only that no force or influence shall ever be used in this case, but the influence of reason and the force of truth.

An opinion of the strength of superstition has been without due examination adopted by some speculative men. The experience of the world, in numberless instances, some of which have been brought forward in this discourse, shows

that the opinion is a mistake. Superstition is not strong ; it is founded, not in nature, but in inaposition ; in sounds without sense, in ceremonies without moral worth, and in authorities of men who lived in darker ages, and whose opinion or advice in any ordinary concern would be deemed of no consequence whatever. Superstition as an operative power in human affairs, is a clumsy machine, requiring all the props of interested art to sustain it, and to prevent it from breaking down by its own weight. Ridicule can destroy it ; sophistry can subvert it ; at the touch of philosophy it will vanish.

True religion, on the contrary, possesses a strength which is effective and durable. It is principle, it is sentiment, it is explicit and personal conviction. Against it ridicule has no point ; in its presence sophistry is silent, and to its worth philosophy bears witness.

But is there no danger that in letting go superstition, true religion may fall with it ? The subjects have been connected, and even the two ideas associated for ages. There is force in the observation, in so far as it suggests that the measures which are adopted to deliver the church from superstition ought to be characterized by prudence, by gentleness, and by charity ; that the work is to be intrusted to the operation of reason, set free on every side from restraint and fear ; and that truth should have fair play under the sacred shade of entire and universal forbearance. But the state of the Christian interest does not permit it to remain in question whether superstition should be preserved on account of any hazards real or supposed attending its removal, for it will not now be spared, it will fall, no human hands can bear it up much longer. Superstition, while it has shut out the glories of true religion from the view of man, has from the horrors of its darkness generated a monster which threatens to tear it in pieces : even as sin produced death to become its destroyer, so superstition hath brought forth infidelity, and is already smitten by its offspring. The question now for the Christian nations to consider is, whether infidelity which the intolerance of the Popish system has fostered, or genuine Christianity which is nursed by religious freedom, is to become the conqueror of superstition and to reign in its stead. The danger in the case is, that infidelity may become suc-

cessful, or may share too widely in the conquest. This is an event on which philosophy had not reckoned, and of which men were not aware, until of late that it has been exhibited with its most dreadful consequence. At the Reformation, when the Catholic superstition received its first great shock, this danger was happily avoided. The Reformers were men of piety and of sound views; and while they day by day threw off from the Christian church large portions of the rubbish which had been accumulating for ages, they became still the more attached to the original fabric, and the more sensible of dignity and perfection.

If in any case matters should be conducted on opposite principles, if the transition should be made from superstition to infidelity, the event must be deplorable; civil society must be torn in pieces; for even humanity would be gone, and without a substitute.

To illustrate this point, let it be considered that superstition itself is an awkward substitution of certain trifling things, instead of moral virtue; and of principles fierce and overbearing, instead of a reasonable faith: that it abounds with obligations such as they are; that it holds mankind quiet through fear; but has no humanity in its system, and has a tendency to repress generosity and mercy in the spirits of men. When therefore superstition has done its work in fixing a national character, and has rendered the tempers of men surly, ferocious, or sanguinary; if infidelity shall then come forward, and without correcting the evil, shall cut asunder all the remaining bonds and checks of obligation, and set society adrift in this state of its desolation, all is lost: the people to whom this happens are in moral ruin. Superstition has first destroyed humanity, and when itself is destroyed, not by principle, but by want of principle, there remains not even a feeling which can stay the hand of violence or mitigate the lot of mankind. A great neighbouring nation has experienced this catastrophe; it is the first instance in the history of mankind, and it has been incurred by the blind policy which induced its rulers to resist the progress of the Reformation, and to crush by a long series of oppression those Huguenots, who by reasoning and good sense alone would have supplanted the superstition by degrees, and gained over the people to a

purser faith and better principles. But the Catholic religion, the great engine which operated destruction on the moral character of the people, was supported exclusively by the secular power, and the necessary consequence was, that its fall was delayed for a time, only that it might become more dreadful. The philosophers, confounding Christianity with its corruptions, drew their premises from the latter to discredit both. The French people, not knowing what religion in its simplicity was, felt the force of the arguments which exposed the national superstition, and were convinced that its principles were absurd, its service trifling, and its arrangements priestcraft. They thought that this was religion which had been refuted, and they threw the whole away. It was then that God Almighty was renounced in the National Assembly, that civil blood streamed without remorse, and that the poniard became the law of the people. The judicial principle of providence enters into the connection of cause and effect in the fate of nations. The massacre of St. Bartholomew, and the revocation of the edict of Nantes, were deeds of enormous sacrilege; they are in the book of remembrance, and in the series of causation; they crushed the regenerating influence of spiritual freedom, they added ferocity to the national character, and taught the people the lessons of murder and extermination, as the treatment of the weaker party: and dreadful has the application been. The heavens still lower over the scene; the end is not yet. To a thinking Christian there remains only this consolation, that all things shall work together for good; that the overruling providence of God makes the wrath of man to praise him; and that in his own unsearchable ways he will accomplish his preparations for the reign of virtue in the ages of peace.

In the present aspect of the Christian world, we see many circumstances which have a visible tendency to facilitate the progress of the gospel in some future period; and other circumstances which obstruct its advancement at present, and may continue to do so until they are removed. The want of success in time past is no reason for the friends of religion to desist from all attempts in future; it is only a reason for trying the effects of some different modes from those which have always failed, and for proceeding upon a full knowledge

of the case, with wisdom and discretion, as well as with zeal. What the modes are which may be adopted in the foreign service with any prospect of success it is not easy to say; perhaps they ought to be as various as are the characters of the nations. With regard to one great nation, the Hindoos, where the leading casts are composed of men of study, and habituated to profound reflection; it has been suggested by the president of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta,* of all men the most competent judge on this subject, that there occurs only one mode in which an impression may be possible. Let no missionaries be employed, let a book be prepared consisting of the clearest prophecies of the Old Testament which relate to the Christian dispensation, accompanied with historical proofs that these prophecies existed before the Christian era. Let it next contain one of the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles,—accompanied simply with proofs of the authenticity of the writings; but let no commentary nor reflections be admitted. The copies of this book in the languages of the country might be placed within the reach of the reading men all over India; it is necessary that Europeans should take no farther charge of it; let it be found as the treasure which has been hid in a field, let it work its way in silence upon the Asiatic mind. If this beginning should be prosperous, it would be easy to introduce in due season the other books of scripture to a willing people.

This proposal, which carries with it the strong characters of genius, suggests to the mind some topics of important reflection. If Christianity should thus be sown rather than planted in a new land, without anything which has been derived through the ecclesiastical or civil literature of the western nations, but the scriptures and the ancient history which is collateral with the scriptures; and if in this state of total and essential detachment from any traditions or usages later than the apostolic age, it should become the predominant religion; what would be the form of the Christian church in that land? how would its divines reason and decide in speculative questions? what regulations in the conduct of worship would they embrace? what ceremonies or plans of church

* Sir William Jones.

government would they adopt? To a philosophical divine nothing could be more curious and interesting than a new church, formed in the circumstances now supposed. In whatever country this should take place, the new system might no doubt be expected to bear in some degree the character of the soil; yet much might be learned from examining a scene so peculiar. Although the specific arrangements which a church in such circumstances might adopt, cannot be antecedently known, the mind may dwell on a topic like this with edification. It may at least throw us out of the line of our prejudices and habits for a moment, and teach us to bear with one another. The Christian communities now mentioned, might in many particular articles of opinion, worship and government, exhibit very different features from any or all of the churches of the West, yet hold the essential characters of Christianity as truly as they. Would it not then be our duty to receive them as brethren, and to meet them in the fellowship of the gospel, and in the communion of its ordinances? You think it would; and that your Christian communion, in such a case as this, ought not to be dependent upon uniformity in opinion or observance. It is well, your principle is liberal and good; but it needs not be laid asleep until an opportunity such as has now been supposed shall occur; there is work for it here. We have Christian churches variously constituted: and we have many classes of sectaries and dissenters, sincere and honest Christians, who do not by any means differ so widely from our notions of doctrine, worship, and government, as a new church might. Go then and respect now in Europe what you own would form a Christian obligation in Asia.

It were to be wished that men of talents, whose engagements lead them to reside among the other nations who are yet strangers to Christianity, would turn their attention to the subject of introducing Christian knowledge, and communicate their thoughts upon the means of making a proper impression upon the countries with which they are connected. It is possible that by resorting to plans hitherto unthought of, adapted respectively to different countries, many of the difficulties which have hitherto operated fatally in this service may be avoided.

These things, however, are hypothetical. The general reformation of the Christians is the great object, which when accomplished will operate the certain success of the religion of our Lord. Every undertaking which contributes to this end, performs its part in the plan of providence, by which Christianity shall become universal.

“Now we see not yet all things put under him.” Christians, let not the partial success which the cause of truth has as yet obtained, disquiet your minds. It was intended to be a work of ages in its progress, and like the other works of God to proceed gradually to the consummation. The loftiest trees of the forest have sprung up from small seeds, and have borne the strife of the elements through many winters, before they have come to their perfection : so the tree which the Lord hath planted must encounter the tempest during its growth, and suffer many chilling blasts, which may arrest its progress in their seasons ; but it shall at last send forth its boughs on every side, and its shade shall be for the refreshing of the nations.

It is not yet eighteen hundred years since the introduction of Christianity. In the plan of God, with whom a thousand years are but as one day, eighteen centuries may form but a small part of the duration of the kingdom of Christ in this scene of things. The prophets have given notice of a scheme of immense extent, and only a small part of it is as yet filled up. God will be glorified in its real and durable success. The Christian churches shall be purified, and united in affection ; the gospel shall be seen in its moral character and its attractive power ; every false religion shall give way, and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in Jesus, and call him blessed ; infidelity shall disappear, war shall cease, and slavery shall be heard of no more.

The actual effects of the great interposition shall then be displayed, through long periods of time, which are indefinitely expressed in prophecy by the term of a thousand years. For how many thousand years in eventual numeration the promised state of things may endure, it is impossible to tell : but, it is consolatory to the human mind, amidst the sorrows and anxieties with which many of the events in the history of mankind are viewed, to reflect that the Lord reigneth,

and that under his providence the preparations are making in secret for the manifestation of his universal kingdom, in the recovery of the nations to virtue, piety, and peace. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the den of the viper. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

CONDUCT AND CHARACTER OF JUDAS ISCARIOT.

BY THE REV. JOHN BONAR.

PREFATORY NOTICE.

JOHN BONAR, the author of the following observations, was descended from ancestors who held a conspicuous place as faithful and able ministers in the Church of Scotland.* He was the eldest son of John Bonar, minister of the united parishes of Fetlar and North Yell, in Zetland; and grandson of John Bonar, minister of Torphichen, in the presbytery of Linlithgow. He was born at Clackmannan, upon the 4th of December 1721; and having completed his studies at the university of Edinburgh, was licensed as a preacher, 9th June 1745. In the following year he was settled minister of Cockpen, in the presbytery of Dalkeith; and while there, was presented to the church of Jedburgh, then vacant. Opposition, however, having been shown to him by the people, who were attached to another, he voluntarily relinquished the appointment—determined upon no account to intrude into a charge, without the consent of the congregation. In 1756, he accepted of an invitation to Perth, where his ministerial gifts and labours were most acceptable and useful, “and where his name is yet remembered with that affectionate veneration which ministerial usefulness alone can produce.”†

His labours here, however, were of short duration, as it pleased the great Disposer of events to cut him off by an inflammatory fever in the midst of the fairest prospects of usefulness, about the end of the year 1761, in the 42d year of his age.

* See the Memoir prefixed to the second volume of Sermons by the Rev. Archibald Bonar, Minister of Cramond, who was the son of the author of the following tract. Four of his grandsons are highly esteemed ministers of the Free church of Scotland, two of whom are well known by their writings.

† Thomson's Memoirs of the Rev. James Scott of Perth, page 40.

From the commencement of his ministry, he gave evident proofs of superior talent, as a zealous and evangelical preacher, and a profound and accomplished scholar. Several small tracts which he published after he was a minister, gave room to hope that, had his life been prolonged, the church might have derived essential benefit from his future labours. His sermon on "The nature and necessity of a religious education," preached before the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, in 1752: and one on "The nature and tendency of the ecclesiastical constitution of Scotland," preached before the Synod of Perth and Stirling, in 1760, have been much and deservedly esteemed, and the latter has been republished since his death, in the "Scots Preacher." In 1745, he published without his name a small pamphlet, entitled, "An Analysis of the moral and religious sentiments contained in the writings of Sopho (Lord Kames) and David Hume, Esq." addressed to the consideration of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The object of this pamphlet was, by a fair induction from the writings of these two authors, then in great celebrity, to collect and bring into view some very obnoxious opinions, which it was pretty evident were meant to be inculcated, though not explicitly avowed. The exposure gave great offence to the friends and admirers of the two authors, and soon produced a rude and angry tract in reply, under the title of "Observations upon the Analysis," written with considerable acrimony, but no great force of argument.

But his first, and perhaps his best publication was a tract, entitled "Observations on the Conduct and Character of Judas Iscariot," in a letter addressed to Mr. James Primrose, minister of Crichton, at whose request it was written. It contains an ingenious, and at the same time satisfactory argument in favour of the divine mission of our Saviour; and is particularly recommended by Dr. Doddridge, as setting "in a most just and beautiful light,"* the important testimony of the apostate Judas to the innocence of his Master. It has, however, been for many years out of print, though much desired, both in this country and in England; and it is therefore hoped, that its publication at this time will not prove altogether unacceptable to the friends of religion.†

* Doddridge's Lectures, vol. ii. p. 5.

† This notice is borrowed from the edition of the tract published by Mr. Oliphant in 1822.

OBSERVATIONS ON JUDAS ISCARIOT.

IN

A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

SIR,—Could I have forced you from that retirement in which you studiously labour to conceal the fruits of an excellent genius and unwearied application, the following argument, of which you suggested the first hint, had appeared with superior strength and advantage. But since all my endeavours to that purpose have been ineffectual, I have ventured to send abroad the result of my own reflections on that head, rather than that any thing which tends to support Christianity, should remain unobserved in an age of so much scepticism and infidelity.

When you first mentioned the conduct of JUDAS as a proof of the Christian religion, the newness of the fancy struck me: for new it was to me. Nor can I yet find any one writer who has sufficiently attended to it;* though I must own that the more I reflect upon it, the more am I convinced of its strength and solidity.

Nothing perhaps contributed more to the uncommon applause and success of Mr. Lyttleton's late ingenious performance, than the compendiousness of his proof, and its depending entirely upon one chain of facts. But however favourable its reception, no man was surprised to find the apostle Paul

* "The testimony of Judas is briefly touched upon by Dr. Benson, in the history of the Life of Jesus Christ, and by Dr. Craig, in his essay on the same subject. In the Theological Repository, vol. iii. No. 2. is an essay on the history and character of Judas. See also vol. ii. No. 14."—*Note to Dod. Lectures*, vol. ii. page 5.

adduced as an evidence of Christianity. But to find Judas Iscariot forced into the same service, will doubtless seem whimsical to some, and absurd to others: yet as people generally allow the testimony of an enemy to be less suspicious than that of a friend, so possibly the setting this matter in a just light, may help to remove the prejudices of those who will credit nothing that comes from the friends of JESUS.

If ever there were an enemy to Christ in the world, Judas was that enemy;—if ever there was an apostate from the faith, Judas was that apostate;—and if ever there was a traitor, he too was the man. And yet to find this malicious, this traitorous, this apostate Judas, instead of disproving Christianity in any point, proving it in every one—sealing a testimony to the truth of it even with his blood, and giving solemn evidence against himself; this, sure, is a phenomenon pretty surprising, and what even the warmest friends of Christianity could scarce have expected. If the infidel suspects the integrity of Paul, let him now hear the testimony of Judas: if the one has no weight with him, surely the other will.

The following observations therefore claim a fair and dispassionate hearing. This is all the favour that they ask; and, it is hoped, it is all that they need.

As it is from the writings of the Evangelists that we have any knowledge of the character and conduct of Judas Iscariot, we must beg leave to quote these as genuine records of the events they pretend to narrate—an honour which I hope our adversaries will not deny them; or, if they should, they must be sensible that as strong a proof can be brought in favour of Luke, and the other New Testament writers, as of any who wrote at an equal distance of time.*

Taking this therefore for granted, I beg leave to transcribe what we find concerning Judas in these ancient records.

The first time Judas is mentioned in the New Testament, is when Christ chooses twelve from the multitude who attended his ministry, and appoints them to be apostles, or

* See Conybeare's *Defence of Revealed Religion*, cap. 9. Campbell on the *Four Gospels*, vol. ii. p. 180. sec. 9. Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*.

particular messengers for propagating his religion. We have the catalogue of these apostles given us by three evangelists, who all conclude it with the name of "Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him." Matt. x. 4; Mark iii. 19; Luke vi. 16.

Some short time after we find him, together with the other eleven, receiving from his great Master power over all unclean spirits—diseases—nay death itself;—and commissioned to go and preach the gospel to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. See Luke ix.

After this we hear nothing of him till a little before the third passover of Christ's public ministry, when many of his disciples left him, upon his declaring, in the synagogue of Capernaum, that he was the "bread of life, which came down from heaven." On this occasion Christ puts the question to the apostles, "Will ye also go away?" Whereupon they all reply, by the mouth of Simon, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God." In answer to which, Christ assures them, that although he had chosen them twelve, yet one of them was "a devil," or should prove his accuser; as the Greek word *Διζβυλος* literally signifies.* which the evangelist assures us he spake of Judas. John vi. 70.

The next time we find him spoken of, is on the Sabbath immediately preceding the passion-week; when Christ, being arrived at Bethany, is invited, with his disciples, to an entertainment in the house of Simon the Leper. During which entertainment a box of very precious ointment is poured out upon Christ's head. Upon which the historian remarks, that some present had indignation; and that Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, expressly said, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? and this he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." John xii. 4; Matt. xxvi.; and Mark xiv.

On the third day of the passion-week, he entered into the infamous contract with the high-priest and rulers of the

* It is so used 1 Tim. iii. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 3; Titus ii. 3.

Jews, to deliver his Master into their hands, of which the Evangelists give us this account :—

“Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, into the palace of the high-priest, who is also called Caiaphas ; and consulted how they might take Jesus by subtilty, and put him to death. But they said, ‘Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people.’ Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, one of the twelve ; and he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them ; and said unto them, ‘What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?’ And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money ; and covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And he promised ; and from that time sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.” Compare Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. and Luke xxi.

“Towards the evening of the fourth day of the passion-week, Jesus comes with his disciples from Bethany to Jerusalem ; and having ordered the passover to be prepared, at the appointed time sits down to eat it with the twelve. During which solemnity, he takes occasion to let them know that he was thoroughly acquainted both with the treachery and the traitor. For being troubled in spirit, he said, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me ; for the hand that betrayeth me, is with me on the table.’ Then the disciples were exceeding sorrowful, and looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake ; and began every one by turns to say, ‘Lord, is it I?’—Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom, one of the disciples whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter, who probably sat on the other side of the table, therefore beckoned unto him, that he should ask who it was of whom he spoke. He then leaning himself down on Jesus’ breast, saith unto him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ Jesus answered with a low voice, so that none of the rest heard, ‘He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it.’ And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas ; who, just as he was reaching out his hand to take it, says, ‘Lord, is it I?’ To which Jesus replied, ‘Thou hast said.’ And immediately after the sop, Satan entered into him ; and, fired with indig-

nation, he rose from the table. Upon which Christ says, 'What thou doest, do quickly.' But none of the disciples, except John, seem to have known with what intent he said so." John xiii.

"After the paschal supper, and the institution of the eucharist, Jesus goes out with his disciples to a garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives; a place Judas was well acquainted with, and where he knew his Master was to spend part of that night. Having therefore received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, he came thither with lanterns, torches, and weapons; and having given them this as a sign whereby they should know the person whom they were to apprehend, he goes up to Christ, and kissing him, saith, 'Hail, Master.' Whereupon Jesus saith, 'Man, wherefore art thou come?—Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?'—Upon which it appears that he shrunk back again amongst the crowd: for immediately, when Christ by a word strikes them all to the ground, it is observed that Judas also stood with them." John xviii.

"Jesus being thus taken, and next day condemned by Pilate to be crucified, Judas repented of what he had done, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood;' and casting down the pieces of silver in the temple, he went and hanged himself." Matt. xxvii.

Luke, in his history of the Acts of the Apostles, has added one circumstance more—that "falling headlong, Judas burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." Acts i. 15. *

This is all the account that the Evangelists give of Judas: and the argument thence arising in favour of Christianity, seems to be this:—Here is a man of sense and ability, thor-

* It may be proper to observe, that amongst other instances from which Mr. Tindal endeavours to overthrow the credit of the gospel history, this of the conduct of Judas is one.—*Christianity as old as the Creation*, p. 245.

And it seems a little odd, that the learned Dr. Conybeare, in his elaborate reply, should leave his adversary in full possession of this objection; saying nothing in answer to it, but that it will be time enough to allege the miscarriage of Judas, when we build anything on his evidence.—*Defence of Revealed Religion*, p. 446.

oughly acquainted with the most secret conduct and views of Jesus, and therefore capable to detect any fraud or imposture that might be carrying on by him ;—a man, not only able to inform against Jesus, but highly willing ;—engaged from principles of honour, interest, and self-preservation ;—tempted by reward, by avarice, by ambition, by resentment, to make the discovery ;—yet this man, after having delivered up Christ through the strength of these temptations, no sooner reflects on what he had done, than his conscience, taking the alarm, makes him in the strongest manner retract, and attest his Master's innocence, before those very rulers to whom he had sold him but a few hours ago ; and finding all had no effect, in an excess of grief and remorse he expires almost in their very presence.—“ I have sinned,” cried he, “ in that I have betrayed innocent blood :”—an attestation of the innocence of Christ, so circumstantiated, that it is scarce possible to suppose a stronger ; and which nothing but the most thorough conviction could have extorted.

If by “ innocent blood,” Judas meant no more than that Christ was a person who had done nothing worthy of death, sure this is the very lowest sense in which the words can be taken. However, taking them no higher, they plainly seem to intimate,

1. That Judas believed that Jesus was the true Messiah, and Son of God, as he all along affirmed himself to be : for otherwise, Christ could not have been a man of truth and veracity, if he laid claim to a character which in no ways belonged to him. In that case, too, he would have been guilty of blasphemy, and consequently worthy of death by the Jewish law.*

2. As he hereby declares his belief that Jesus was the true Messiah, so he in effect declares, that, in as far as he could discern, his miracles were all true, his doctrine divine, and

* That Judas knew Christ to be the true Messiah, seems also evident from Matt. xxvi. 49. and Luke xxii. 48. where Christ says to him, upon receiving the treacherous kiss, “ Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man ? ” i. e. the person whom thou knowest to be the Son of man, or Messiah. Which interpretation gives the words a force and spirit, which I have not seen attended to by any but the devout and learned Dr. Doddridge — *Family Expositor*, vol. ii. p. 507.

his life pure and holy : for it was from these things that he must have been convinced that Jesus was the Messiah.

3. Judas hereby declares, that, for his part, he was privy to no design formed by Christ of erecting a temporal kingdom ; otherwise he must have reckoned, that he ought to have suffered death, if not by the Jewish, at least by the Roman law.

4. By this expression, Judas strongly declares his opinion, that Christ was innocent of the crimes laid to his charge by the Sanhedrim ; particularly, of deceiving the people by pretended miracles ;—stirring them up to sedition against Cæsar, saying, “that he himself was a king ;”—and casting out devils by magic, or Beelzebub the prince of the devils :—and consequently, he hereby declares, in the strongest manner, his total and profound ignorance of those frauds and collusions, of which some quick-sighted modern deists have made surprising discoveries.

But one is apt to think, that the words “innocent blood” imply somewhat more than all this.—They seem to point out, that Judas was convinced, not only that Jesus was an innocent man, but a beneficent one ;—one constantly employed in doing good ;—and particularly, that he was a man remarkable for meekness of temper ; of a merciful, compassionate, and harmless disposition ; void of ambition, innocent, and quiet.

Now, if it can be made appear, that the person giving such a strong attestation to the innocence of Christ, was one well acquainted with his most secret views ;—was one able to form a just judgment of them ;—was one who would have been fond to find out and expose any fraud ;—and was one who could have no worldly interest to serve by adhering to Christ, but, on the contrary, had every inducement to detect his design : if, I say, these things can be made appear, will it not strongly conclude, that Jesus was what he professed himself to be, the true Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world ?

This is an argument founded on the few simple facts above set down ; which it requires no depth of thought to comprehend, and no abstract reasoning to discover. The consequence, I apprehend, is undeniable, provided the premises

are able to support such a fabric. It must therefore be the business of the following pages, to examine these with becoming accuracy.

And here the leading inquiry will be, Whether the person giving such a strong attestation to the innocence of Jesus, in these peculiar circumstances, was one of sense and ability; able to form a just opinion of Christ and his designs?—For unless we can be assured of his capacity, his testimony will have very little weight; since it is impossible to draw any argument from the freakish inconsistencies of conduct into which a man of a weak mind may run; whereas, when a man of sense changes his conduct, we are naturally led to inquire into the grounds upon which he proceeds.

We are not indeed able to trace out the birth and education of Judas, which lies in equal obscurity with that of the other apostles. He is called the son of Simon, and Judas Iscariot; but neither of these epithets gives much light into the matter. They are probably added, to distinguish him from the other Judas, who was faithful to the death. Some have supposed him the son of Simon the leper, in whose house Jesus was so elegantly entertained a few days before he suffered. The ingenious Mr. Fleming concludes him the son of Simon the Canaanite. But both opinions are merely conjectural; though either of them seems more probable than the fancy of those who will have him a native of Corecya, where his house and posterity, say they, may yet be seen;* or the notion of the Cainites, who make him the head of a considerable family in the tribe of Issachar.†

I should not have mentioned these uncertain conjectures, did they not seem to intimate a general notion that prevailed very early in the church, that Judas was some considerable person; which I scarce know how to account for, but by supposing, that, by birth or education, he was somehow conspicuous in the college of the apostles. For why should the earliest writers, by a sort of general consent, in this manner aggrandize the traitor, while they speak of the other apostles, in a different style?

As to his name Iscariot, some refer it to the office of purser

* Petrus a Valle, in itineribus suis, pars 1. Turc., Epist. 1.

† Calmet's Dictionary, art. JUDAS.

which he bore in Christ's family, from a Hebrew word of much the same sound, and correspondent meaning. But the opinion of those seems better founded, who, deriving it from the place of his birth, read Judas Ish-Carioth, that is, Judas a man of Carioth, a small town beyond Jordan.*

But it is much more to the present purpose to observe, that this person was made choice of by Jesus to be one of his apostles and constant attendants; which will sufficiently warrant our concluding him a man of good natural sense and ability.† For although Christ made choice of men in low life to be his apostles; yet I can see no reason why we must conclude them fools too, unless we will say that good sense is only to be found among the sons of learning and fortune. So that Judas being of the number of the apostles, gives a strong presumption in his favour; since there is the very best reason to conclude them all men of sound minds and good understandings, though not brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.

To this we must add, that Judas was raised by Christ to a sort of superior station in the family.—He was appointed treasurer; a place which would doubtless be given to the man of greatest activity, and acquaintance with the world. In this office he not only had the custody of what presents were made to Jesus and his disciples, which required a person of reputed honesty; but also he had the laying out of that money, for their daily maintenance and support, which called for a man of activity and discretion. Nay, it appears that to him Jesus had been in practice of leaving the distributions for the poor; which supposes a high opinion of his judgment and prudence; qualifications essentially necessary to the prudent conferring of charity.

And if we may build anything upon the opinion of those who had best access to know him, his fellow-disciples and

* The different conjectures as to the meaning and derivation of the name may be seen in Bartolocci Bib. Rab. tom. iii. p. 24.

† That the apostles were men of superior sense to the bulk of people in their station, will scarce be denied by the Deists; who upon that very supposition build all the phenomena of Christianity, which, according to them, were contrived by Jesus Christ, and these twelve cunning impostors.

apostles, he seems to have been in no small repute among them; for when the plainest intimations were given by Christ, as we have seen above, that one of them should betray him, nay, that Judas was the person, yet no man suspected him; which doubtless would have been the case, had they judged him either a deceitful or a weak man, capable of acting such a base and dishonourable part.

The manner too in which he conducted the treachery from first to last, gives no bad specimen of his abilities.

That he commenced a disciple of Jesus from worldly views and prospects, will scarce be denied. With the rest of the Jews of that time, he had long expected the promised Messiah, hoping to find him a temporal monarch who should rescue their nation from the oppression of the Romans, and raise it to the highest pitch of grandeur. The fame of Jesus had reached his ears; and possibly the miracle wrought on the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, made him conclude that certainly he must be the person; for it is soon after this miracle that he is numbered with the apostles.*

As these views made him commence a disciple, the same views soon made him resolve to abandon that way. Covetousness was the reigning passion of his soul. He found in Christ's family nothing to gratify it, nor any prospect of the matter mending in that respect; and therefore he resolved to abandon his new profession; but in such a way as he might make something by the bargain. Knowing the hatred of the Jewish rulers to his Master, he resolved to deliver him into their hands, hoping they would generously reward such a service. But that he might make the most possible of his treachery, he resolved to delay the execution of it until there should be something considerable in the bag; which he shrewdly enough conjectured might be the case when his Master should go up to Jerusalem to the passover; where the very sacrifices they were to offer, and the other necessary expenses, would require a larger stock than was necessary in

* It appears from the history, that Christ did not make choice of the twelve till some weeks after the second passover; for though there is mention made of his calling Philip, Nathanael, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, long before; yet it was only at the above period that they were appointed to be apostles, or messengers.

their country retirement.* And this I think will naturally account for delaying the execution of his design so long after he had formed it; for it is beyond all question, from the plain intimations that our Lord gives long before of the intended treachery, that there was such a design in his head.†

But however Judas had formed such a design, he so artfully concealed it, that none but the all-searching eye could penetrate the disguise. Often do the other disciples betray their expectations of a worldly kingdom; but we never hear a syllable to this purpose drop from the lips of Judas. Two forward disciples may pray down fire from heaven, to consume the Samaritans, who would not receive and honour their Lord: but Judas discovers no such imprudent zeal.—The sons of Zebedee may solicit to sit one on the right hand and the other on the left, in his kingdom; but Judas betrays no such ambitious weakness. And when we find him reproving Mary for anointing Jesus, it is under the specious pretence of giving to the poor.—As to the perpetrating the treachery, how artfully is it managed? His agreement with the priests is privately made, and the most private opportunity taken to put it in execution. Nay, when he gave the treacherous kiss he seems to have hoped to pass undiscovered. He came in the dark, went at some distance before the multitude, and afterwards mingled with the crowd. In short, a design could not have been better laid, more artfully carried on or cautiously executed, than this of Judas betraying Christ; which shows him master of no small address and cunning.

I might conclude this head, with observing, that to his natural sagacity there was added superior powers by Jesus, when he sent him out with the other apostles, and gave him power over all unclean spirits,‡ diseases, and death itself;

* For it is pretty evident, that the apostles never attended Christ to Jerusalem till the last passover. They were not appointed till after the second passover; our Lord went not up to the third; so that this fourth was the first they attended in company with him. And it is probable, that our Lord did not choose to appear with such a retinue until his time should be fully come; that so he might not too much alarm the Jewish rulers.

† See Apostolic Constitutions, book v. ch. 14, where we find these words, *Ἐκ πολλοῦ μὲν διαστράφεις.*

‡ It seems to me an excessive refinement to distinguish unclean

from which moment he must be considered as a person endowed in a very extraordinary manner.

So that, upon the whole, the first observation made, namely, that Judas was a man of sense and ability, and sufficiently able to judge if Christ was carrying on any fraud, is abundantly evident.

But as this is the basis upon which all the subsequent argument rests, I must not dismiss it till I have obviated one objection, that seems to lie against this part of Judas' character, as a man of sense and sagacity; and that is, his selling his Master for such a trifle as thirty pieces of silver, little more than £3 15s., or, according to Dean Prideaux, £4 10s. of our money: which seems rather to represent him as a greedy fool, who knew not how to make use of the opportunities which offered of gratifying his covetousness; as none can doubt but that the Jewish rulers would have given a much greater sum rather than allowed Jesus to have escaped them.

I frankly own, that there has been no part of his conduct for which I have found it so difficult to account, as this. Once I was in hopes of finding, that 'a piece of money' might be applied to other coins as well as to the shekel, so that the sum might be greater than what interpreters generally fix it. And in this I thought myself not a little supported, by what the Evangelist assures us, that with that money they were able to purchase a field in Jerusalem for a burying-place to strangers. But I am now convinced, that it is not to be accounted for in this way. For,

1. I cannot find that a piece of silver, or a silverling, is ever applied to any Jewish coin but to the shekel; whereas to that it is very often applied in the Old Testament.

2. Nor would increasing the value of the pieces of silver at all agree with what we find in the prophet Zechariah concerning this very transaction, of the price given by the Jews for Jesus; where the thirty pieces of silver given to the prophet

spirits from other evil spirits which might possess men, supposing the word only to signify such kind of spirits as drove men to dwell among tombs, by which they became ceremoniously unclean; for it is evident that unclean and evil spirits are generally used as synonymous, referring to the moral impurity and malignity of their natures. Compare Matt. xii. 13; Luke xi. 24; and Rev. xvi. 13, 14.

as his hire, is spoken of as a sign of the contempt in which they held him and his services.* A goodly price (says he) at which they have valued me. It was the very price which a slave was to give for his liberty, and at which slaves were bought among them.

3. And as to the purchasing a field with these thirty pieces of silver, which seems to intimate a much greater sum, it may not be difficult to account for that, especially if we grant the place which is at present shown to travellers, to be the very spot; for it is not above thirty yards long, and fifteen broad.† And when the evangelist calls it the potter's field, he gives us a reason why it might be such a cheap purchase, as having been employed formerly in making and burning earthen ware, it must have been marred for any valuable use.

For these reasons, I apprehend we cannot reasonably increase the value of the thirty pieces of silver; but must endeavour to account for Judas' conduct in selling his Master for such a trifle, in some other way. And to this the history itself seems to give us a key. For, however covetousness might have been the reigning passion of his soul, yet it is very evident, that resentment pushed him on to the immediate execution of his design. He judged himself affronted by Jesus, when at the last supper he pointed him out as the ungrateful person who was to betray him. The discovery seems to have exasperated him to the last degree; for he instantly sprung from the table; and, leaving the room, went directly to the chief priests, to conclude the infamous bargain about which he had formerly treated with them. And if we attend to the then temper of his mind, we shall find the part which he acted, a natural consequence of covetousness and resentment. His covetousness would not allow him to give up Jesus for nought; whereas, on the other hand, his resentments were so keen and pungent, that he had not coolness enough to make the most advantageous bargain, but impatient for revenge, accepted what they offered. For which this further reason may be assigned, That, as his design was now

* Zech. xi. 12. Ignatii epist. ad Philip. ὃν ἱτιμησάντο ἀπὸ υἱὸν Ἰσραήλ. This whole prophecy is set in a very clear light, in Dr. Doddridge's Family Expositor, vol. ii. p. 590.

† Maundrel's Travels, p. 101

known, he must either immediately accept of the offer that had been made him, otherwise the opportunity was for ever lost.—And as for the Jewish rulers offering no higher a bait, it may naturally enough be accounted for, from that contempt in which they professed to hold Christ and his adherents: whereas had they offered a much greater sum, it would have convinced others, that these very rulers judged him more formidable than they were willing to own.—Wherefore I cannot see, that from this part of his history any objection can be brought against what was formerly alleged in favour of his sense and sagacity.*

But it will not be sufficient to our present purpose, that Judas was a man of good understanding, perfectly capable of penetrating into the most secret designs of Jesus and his disciples, unless we can also show, that he had sufficient opportunities of informing himself as to these. This therefore, in the second place, must be canvassed and examined.

Various reasons have been assigned by those who comment upon Christ's life and history, for his making choice of Judas to be an apostle, while yet he was thoroughly acquainted with the badness and insincerity of his heart; as if he thereby intended to teach us only to judge by the external conduct:—that ordinances derive not their virtue and efficacy from the administrator; and that even in the purest societies upon earth we must expect a mixture of good and bad men.

These indeed are pious instructions; but they seem far from containing the whole of the case. The scheme now under consideration suggests, in my apprehension, a still more important reason, namely, that by choosing Judas into his family, who should afterwards prove a traitor, Christ would show the world, that he was not afraid to have his most secret conduct witnessed by his enemies; and lest they should suspect that there was some fraud privately carrying on, he would

* Though many fanciful solutions of this difficulty have been given, yet none of them seem equal to that of Martin Kempius, who affirms, that Judas got the tenth of whatever was put into the bag. When therefore Mary had poured out the precious box of ointment which might have been sold for 300 pence, or pieces of silver, of which his tenth would just have been thirty, he goes to the Jews, and promises, if they will make up that sum, to deliver his Master into their hands.—*Mart. Kempius de osculo Judæ.*

venture to initiate one of their own party into all the mysteries of his religion: a conduct which, I dare say, every man must be convinced, stands clear of the least suspicion of imposture.*

I apprehend it will readily be granted, that, upon the supposition that Jesus was carrying on a fraud, this could not have been done without accomplices. It was an imposture of that nature, as could not have been managed by one man alone. Jesus aspired to nothing lower than being thought the Messiah; in consequence whereof he not only pretended to work miracles himself, but to give the power of doing so to others.

Now, if accomplices were necessary, none, I dare say, will be thought so proper for this purpose as the twelve apostles; nay, our adversaries will not scruple to grant that these were the very persons. They were pitched upon from the whole multitude of his disciples, to be stated and constant attendants upon him; they were present at his public teachings; they were the companions of his most private hours: so that if he held any esoteric or secret opinion, if he carried on any private design which he artfully disguised from the world, it must certainly have been known to them.

Judas was one of this number; and by the whole of the history, appears to have been admitted into as great confidence and familiarity as the other apostles. And, however it may be pretended that the eleven, deeply tinctured with enthusiasm, might easily be imposed upon; yet this cannot be alleged of Judas, who afterwards made it evident, that he had never so fully entered into their designs. Free then from this bias, with all his senses alert, nay, as will appear, with the design of quitting their party full in his eye, and therefore watching every occasion against them; was he not able to discover in their most free and private conversation

* Amongst other valuable hints on this argument which occur in 'Kœcheri notis in Grotium de ver. relig. Christ.' there is the following, taken from the 'Oblationes spontaneæ,' obl. 31. N. 4. p. 78. "Haud dubie propterea in Apostolorum numerum adscitus a Jesu olim Judas fuit, ut intime omnia pernosceret quæ Christus agebat, atque deinde testimonium præbere posset. Quod si igitur in doctrinis aut moribus Christi quid animadvertisset, quod cui turpe ac nefarium culpari jure potuisset, id sane haud tacuisset."

the bottom of the plot? Must he not have known whether Jesus lived as he taught? or if, while he recommended the strictest morality to others, he indulged himself in any private crimes? which would certainly have been the case had he been an impostor.

To which I must add one very strong consideration on this head, of Judas' opportunities of knowing if any fraud was carrying on by Jesus Christ and his disciples; and that is, that Christ not only pretended to work miracles himself, but also pretended to give the same power to his disciples: "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases: and they departed, and went through the towns preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere." And lest we should suspect that Judas was not so highly endued, the evangelist Matthew takes care, immediately after this commission, to subjoin a complete catalogue of the apostles who received these powers, in which Judas is particularly mentioned.*

Judas heard his Master pretend to give him such powers; and, in consequence thereof, he goes and makes the experiment on the first diseased person he meets. Must he not then immediately have known whether the effect followed, and whether the lame and the blind received their sight and strength? If he saw this undeniably the case, what a strong conviction must it have wrought in his mind that his Master was the Messiah? And how naturally does it account for that anguish he afterwards endured, upon his basely betraying him? Whereas, on the other hand, had Judas discovered all to be trick, had he discovered that the pretended cures were only the effect of a collusion betwixt the persons who feigned the disease and Christ, would he have failed to lay open the cheat? Especially if we add, that in case there was any fraud

* Kcecherus, in his forecited book, p. 172. among other proofs that Christ did not work his miracles by magic, or acquaintance with the secret powers of nature, says—"Judas Iscariot, cum ipse quoque opera miraculosa perfecit, Matt. x. 1. haud dubie artes illas calluit. Id vero si sese habuisset, aut Judas usus fuisset isto arcano, ad avaritiam suam explendam, aut eum Dominum suum proderet, miracula ejus meras esse imposturas, nitique occultis naturæ viribus, revelasset. Neutrum vero cum fecit Judas, illud manifesto est argumentum, miracula Jesu præstigias haud fuisse."

carrying on by Jesus and his disciples, Judas had every supposable inducement to make the discovery : which, joined to what has already been said of his knowledge and opportunities, will, in my apprehension, go a great way to make the argument conclusive.

This will hold true whatever the personal character of Judas is supposed to be. Had he been a man of conscience and honesty, who waited for the consolation of Israel, and had commenced a disciple of Jesus, in hopes of finding in him the long-wished-for Messiah ; we may easily be convinced what part he would have acted, upon finding his hope disappointed, and that, instead of a prophet, he was following an impostor. —Regard to truth, and the glory of God, would not have allowed him to hesitate one moment. He must not only have abandoned the party himself, but have fairly laid open their frauds and secret practices to others. Regardless of whatever reflection the dishonest or unthinking part of mankind might throw upon him, as having once been of the party, he would about to undeceive the multitude, and wish to confront the impostor himself.

Regard to the religion of his country would greatly have strengthened such a resolution. It is well known how zealous the bulk of the Jews were on this head ; which alarmed them the more at the pretensions of Jesus to be the Messiah, while his doctrine tended so evidently to set aside their numerous rites and ceremonies : so that, as a good son of the church, Judas would have been led to use the utmost care to prevent the dangerous infection.

All the principles of benevolence and love to mankind would have awaked in his breast, in order to induce him to a speedy discovery, that so others might be prevented from falling into the snare in which he was well nigh caught. And this too would he have judged the best return of gratitude to that God who had saved him from being entirely led aside by the error of the wicked.

In fine, to such a speedy discovery he would have been strongly excited by the powerful motive of love to his country. —It was one reason why the more politic Jews gave so little regard to the various circumstances that concurred to prove Jesus the Messiah, lest by seeming to acknowledge any other

king than Cæsar, they should give a handle to the Romans, under whose yoke they lay, to take away their city and nation. The force of which argument was the greater, as they could not yet have forgot the many inconveniences which two pretenders to that character had brought upon them a few years before: instances which, as they happened in Judas' own time, must have been more than enough to overbalance any argument that might be brought to the contrary by the false shame of commencing informer.

By such views and motives must Judas have been actuated, had Jesus been an impostor, and he a man of integrity and conscience.

But supposing, what indeed is the fact, that this Judas was a man of a very opposite character, was an abandoned wretch, destitute of honour, conscience, and love to his country; yet, even in that case, interest, powerful private interest, must soon have determined him to make a discovery of the fraud, if any such was carrying on.

A man of such a character must certainly have commenced disciple from worldly views, concluding that Christ was to erect a temporal kingdom. He hoped, by joining him so early, to merit the highest preferments in that future monarchy. But finding himself disappointed, and that there was neither honour, riches, nor fame to be got in his service; nay that the very Master himself seemed, by some unaccountable conduct, always to decline any advantages that were thrown in his way, and whimsically talked of a spiritual kingdom; observing this to be the case, would not rage at his disappointment naturally lead him to divulge the secret? which, too, would have been a sufficient apology for abandoning a sect which he had once espoused.

If covetousness was the chief bent of his mind, this was most likely to be gratified by a discovery. He knew how inveterate the chief priests and rulers were against Jesus, and with what malice and keenness they sought his ruin: so that he might reasonably expect to be well paid for what discovery he should make to them.

Nor can it be alleged that such a discovery would either have subjected him to odium or danger.

To odium or reproach it could never have exposed him

with any man of sense and reflection; for his discovering such a fraud, stood justified by every motive and consideration which can have weight in such a case. So that instead of reproach his uncommon honesty would have merited universal applause. Nay, we may go one step further, and affirm, that the applauses which he merited would have been liberally conferred upon him; immediately he must have become the darling of all the rulers; and this fully obviates the other part of the objection, that possibly he might have been deterred through fear from making the discovery. But of whom, pray, was he to be afraid? Of Jesus and his followers? A very inconsiderable party indeed, without either number, power, or influence; who, so far from being able to injure others, could not even defend themselves.

Ere I dismiss this head, it will be proper to add, that the manner in which Jesus all along treated his followers, and the apostles themselves, makes it evident that he was never afraid of what discoveries they could make.

It is the interest of every impostor, not only to gain partisans, but also to manage those whom he may have gained with the utmost delicacy and address, lest, forsaking his party, they should work his ruin: an observation which stands confirmed by the practice of all impostors that have yet appeared in the world. But instead of this address and management, we find Jesus always treating his disciples with the greatest plainness and freedom. When two of them, incensed at the conduct of the Samaritans, would have prayed down fire from heaven upon those despisers of their Master, instead of applauding their zeal, Jesus tells them, that they knew not what spirits they were of. How oft in presence of the multitude, does he blame the twelve for their dulness and incredulity? And, when, from the tenderest affection, Peter had declared himself unwilling to hear of his sufferings and death, he receives the sharp rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savourest not the things which be of God."

But not to insist on these, and many instances of the same kind which occur in the gospel with regard to the other disciples, let us observe the behaviour of Jesus towards this very Judas, and we shall find it such as naturally tended to

irritate and provoke him to a discovery, if he had any discovery to make.

If Judas had conceived a design of betraying his Master some considerable time before he put it in execution, we find Jesus speaking of it even then as a thing he was well acquainted with. "Behold I have chosen you twelve, and one of you shall prove my accuser." This he repeats at sundry times. And though, as afterwards appears, he was as well acquainted with the person of the traitor as the treachery in general; yet he by no means observes any particular delicacy of conduct towards him. When he was to be transfigured, he keeps him back from the honour of that glorious transaction. When this Judas animadverts upon Mary's anointing his Master's feet, we find Jesus soon silencing him, by openly vindicating the woman, and condemning the reflection thrown out against her. But as if all this had not been sufficient, at the last paschal supper we find him pointed out by Jesus as the ungrateful monster who, though he dipped with him in the dish, should in a few hours betray him. Then too does he hear the most dreadful judgments denounced against himself, which immediately filled his mind with the keenest desires of revenge; so that in fury he springs from the table. But Jesus, instead of being alarmed at this, as he must certainly have been had not all his conduct been fair and honest, puts him, as it were, to the defiance; bids him go do what he intended; and that, instead of flying from him, he would even so far countenance his design as to retire to the private garden of Gethsemane, a place with which the traitor was well acquainted, and where he might apprehend him without disturbance.

To all which I may add, that, knowing the covetous temper of Judas, he had before committed the bag to him, that he might always have it in his power to run off with advantage.

Now, let any man say if he discerns ought in such a conduct that can give the least suspicion of imposture. Nay, does not the fair and open part which Jesus acts, strongly argue the contrary?

Thus I have endeavoured to show that Judas was thoroughly acquainted with the most secret designs of Jesus; that he had sufficient capacity to discover any fraud that

might be carrying on; and that he had all possible inducements to lead him to make such a discovery: so that it only remains that we inquire in fact what part this Judas acted.

Does he, in consequence of having got to the bottom of the plot, go to the rulers of the Jews and make the discovery? Sure, nothing could have so much ingratiated him into their favour. Such a discovery would have been of far greater importance to them than the death of the impostor. Hereby should they have been enabled effectually to oppose his designs, and ruin his credit with the people. Hereby should they have been furnished with a just ground of accusation against him; an accusation not founded on matters of doubtful disputation, or questions of their law, but on the reason of things,—on common justice and equity.

This too would have most successfully gratified Judas' revenge against Christ, and fully exonerate him in forsaking a party he had once espoused.

How wide of this was the part he acted! From covetousness and revenge he resolves to deliver his Master into the hands of the Jewish priests. This resolution he executes in the manner above mentioned; yet he has not the effrontery to allege any one crime of which he was guilty; although I think it pretty evident from the history, that the Jewish Sanhedrim had examined Judas very particularly about Jesus—about his miracles—his doctrine—and his predictions; and that he had told them every thing he knew about these.*

Had Judas made any discoveries to the prejudice of Christ, which no doubt he would have done, had he been able, it would not long have remained a secret. Our Lord had been twitted with it at his trial—it had been thrown up to Judas when he came, saying, "I have betrayed innocent blood,"—and it would have been objected to his apostles afterwards when brought to a trial for propagating the same religion. But in none of these cases was there the least insinuation to this purpose; but, on the contrary, after all they could ex-

* It seems probable that it was Judas who informed the Sanhedrim of what Christ had said about his resurrection on the third day; otherwise, I cannot see how they came to be so distinctly informed about it, as they tell Pilate they were; for, so far as I can recollect, Christ never spoke of his resurrection plainly to any but the apostles.

pisicate, we find them entirely at a loss how to lay their accusation against Christ, or how to prove it even after it was laid.

And as for Judas, no sooner does he see what the consequences of his treachery would be, and that the Jews were actually proceeding to put Christ to death, than his conscience takes the alarm, and drives him in despair to be his own executioner. For it is the same thing as to the present argument, whether, according to our translation, we make Judas to have hanged himself, or, as the Greek words might be rendered, that, falling down on his face, he was suffocated through the excess of his grief, and burst asunder in the middle. Only, if we take this last to be the fact, it is worth observing, that the Talmudists make such a suffocation the punishment which God was wont to inflict on such persons as bore false witness against their neighbour.*

Now, let any man attempt to account rationally for this excess of grief and remorse, upon the supposition that Jesus was an impostor, and that Judas knew him to be such. In which case his discovery would have stood justified by the most rational arguments, and no foundation could have been laid for such anguish of mind. But allowing the fact as it stands, and this to have been the end of Judas, does it not strongly conclude that after Judas, a man of sense and ability, had been thoroughly acquainted with Christ's life and doctrine, and for a considerable time had watched every occasion against him, and at last, from covetousness and revenge, had delivered him into the hands of his enemies; yet he was firmly persuaded that Jesus was an innocent person, and the true Messiah; whose religion we are bound to receive as a revelation sent from God.

Having thus observed the consequences of Judas' treach-

* What it was that drove Judas to despair, rather than to ask forgiveness of this meek and merciful Lamb of God, I shall not determine. But it seems to me evident, that two things contributed greatly to it: 1st, A conviction that he had betrayed the true Messiah; and 2dly, A remembrance of those awful warnings that Christ had formerly given him. "The Son of man," saith Christ, "goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed; good were it for that man that he had never been born."

ery with regard to himself, it may not be improper, before I shut up the argument, to show what influence it had on Jesus and his apostles.

As to Jesus himself, I am persuaded that every man who reads the Gospels must be charmed with his behaviour in this last period of his life. Whether Jesus was the Messiah or not, this will be allowed, that he was one betrayed by a pretended friend ; than which no circumstance can tend more to sour the mind, and ruffle the temper, and every one must know what bitter reproaches such traitors receive, and ought to receive. But Jesus, superior to all trials, meets this horrid treachery with an heroic fortitude, and reproaches the traitor in no harsher terms than these, “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?”

As to the disciples of Jesus, especially the eleven, notwithstanding this horrid treachery of one of their number, and the crucifixion of their Master, which happened thereupon : yet they continue firmly united in carrying on the design of Christ, and establishing his religion in the world ; which it was impossible for them to do had they been carrying on a fraud, or aggrandizing an impostor. For the case is the same here as in common life. If any twelve persons were engaged in a conspiraey, and one of them should go and discover the plot, this would at once put an end to the designs of the other eleven, and render it impossible for them any longer to carry them into execution. That union and harmony which is the very soul of combination, would henceforward be broken ; and to that would succeed a mutual jealousy and distrust, every one suspecting that his neighbour might also become a traitor.—The same must have been the case with the disciples of Jesus, had they not been entirely honest in their views. But as they were only adhering to truth, neither the treachery of Judas, nor the denial of Peter, in the least influenced them to abandon the cause in which they were engaged.

Thus I have endeavoured to state an argument in favour of Christianity from the conduct and character of Judas the traitor. I have examined it with all the attention I am capable of, and have endeavoured to show that it is conclusive : though I am far from laying the stress of the whole

cause upon it. No; blessed be God, we have a cloud of witnesses attesting the innocence of Jesus, and the truth of our holy religion, upon which all our hopes for time and eternity are founded;—witnesses whose characters have been canvassed, and their evidence illustrated, not only by those of former times, but also by the most masterly writers of this and the preceding age, laymen as well as clergy.* Against whom I may safely say, the advocates for infidelity have maintained a very unequal conflict; since, notwithstanding their keenest efforts for these hundred years, they have not been able to weaken the smallest pillar by which the noble fabric stands supported.

Would to God I could say, that they had succeeded no better against the life and practice of religion. As a heart-love to wickedness is at the bottom of their opposition to the gospel, their impiety has still kept pace with their infidelity; and, as the most effectual way to debauch our principles, they have laboured hard to debauch our practice: and what melancholy success they have had in this respect, every one who hath eyes or ears can tell.—While on the other hand, many of the friends of Christianity have been more careful to preserve our principles than to reform our lives. But, sure it is now high time to awake, and to stand in the gap against impiety as well as infidelity. Nor can we hope with success to discourage the latter, unless we shall be able to suppress the former. For so long as men are vicious, they will have a strong propensity to throw off those restraints which Christianity would lay upon their passions, and free themselves from that dread which it naturally inspires into the wicked.

I am,

SIR,

Yours, &c.

* Besides the observations on the conversion of St. Paul, already referred to, I have in mine eye Mr. West's elegant and striking remarks on the evidences of Christ's resurrection; and the present bishop of London's (Sherlock) Trial of the Witnesses; a book which, I am persuaded, will stand the test of ages, notwithstanding the ungenteel insinuation which Dr. Middleton has lately thrown out against it.

ON
THE PERFECTION AND USEFULNESS
OF THE DIVINE LAW.

BY JOHN SMALLEY, D.D.

Is an able article on "Modern Explanations of the doctrine of Inability," which originally appeared in the "Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review," and which has been reprinted in the tenth number of the "British and Foreign Evangelical Review," Dr. Smalley and his writings are spoken of in the following terms:—"Dr. Smalley's little treatise" (on the Inability of the Sinner, &c., inserted in the first volume of these "Theological Tracts") "has long been accounted standard among those who attach importance to the distinction between natural and moral inability, which it elaborately explains and vindicates. It is for the most part characterized by candour and good judgment. It clearly and ably sets forth much important truth."—"The author was among the most judicious and weighty of the circle commonly known as the New England divines. He protested ably and earnestly against the extravaganzas of Emmons. He contributed largely to give the distinction of natural and moral inability the prominence which it has had in American theology." The following discourse "On the Perfection and Usefulness of the Divine Law," is not inferior to the able dissertation "On the Sinner's Inability." It was originally preached before the students of Yale college, and has never, so far as I know, been before printed in this country.

ON

THE PERFECTION AND USEFULNESS OF

THE DIVINE LAW.

PSALM xix. 7.—“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ”

SOME are said to teach such doctrine concerning regeneration, as supposes that no means can be of any efficacy or use in the case of the unregenerate. Many, undoubtedly, have no opinion of legal preaching, as adapted to promote the salvation of men. It will, however, be universally agreed, that means are to be used for the conversion of sinners, as well as for the perfecting of the saints. And I believe there are few who will not admit that the law ought to be preached, for both these purposes, as well as the gospel.

Good men may dispute about words ; and they may have different ideas, in many matters of nice speculation : but all good men delight to meditate in the law of the Lord ; and all good gospel ministers desire, by all lawful means, to be instrumental of the conversion of souls. For these reasons it is presumed that the words now read, if properly opened and illustrated, will not be uninteresting or unentertaining to the present audience.

The general subject of this Psalm, is the glorious manifestation which God had given of himself, by the light of nature, and by the light of revelation. In the first six verses are set forth, in lofty language, the illustrious displays of the divine perfections, in the works of creation and of common providence. “The heavens,” it is said, “declare the glory

of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech," &c. At this seventh verse, the Psalmist passes from the works, to celebrate the word of God, as discovering yet greater glories, and as being productive of still more wonderful effects. "The law of the Lord is perfect," says he, "converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

By the law of the Lord may be meant, the whole revelation of God's mind and will which had then been given to mankind. But what is here said of it is especially applicable to the moral law; and to this only, particular attention will be paid in the present discourse. Two things are asserted in the text concerning the divine law. In regard to its intrinsic excellence, it is said to be perfect; respecting its use, in the present fallen state, it is spoken of as converting the soul. Accordingly it is proposed to consider,

I. The perfection of the law of God; and,

II. Its subserviency to the conversion of the souls of men.

The perfection of the divine law first claims our careful attention.

If it be asked in what respects the law of the Lord is perfect; the general answer is, in all respects. Like its glorious author, it is light, and in it "is no darkness at all." But since an apostle hath said, "the law is holy, and the commandment is *holy*, and *just*, and *good*;" it may be proper to illustrate these three perfections of the moral law more particularly.

First, then, the law of God is perfectly *holy*. This appears in its prohibitions, in its requirements, and in its sanctions. "I have seen an end of all perfection," says the Psalmist, "but thy commandment is exceeding broad."

So extensive is the divine law that it forbids all sin, even in the very inclination of the mind, as well as in all manner of conversation. Human expositions, of old time, had indeed given it a more limited construction; as though, like the laws of man, it respected only overt acts, and the grosser instances of iniquity. But our divine Teacher, who was in the bosom of the Father, hath expounded it in a latitude becoming the

law of the most holy God, who looketh on the heart. In his exposition it forbids not only actual murder, gross adultery, and bearing false witness; but every idle word, every lascivious look, and every first emotion of unreasonable resentment.

Nor hath he explained the law only as forbidding all positively evil volitions and exercises, as if no positive duty, on the contrary, were required,—as if, “to him that knoweth to do good,” only *not* to do it, were no sin,—as if bare omissions and neglects were no more criminal in a rational creature, than in stocks and stones. According to our Saviour, and indeed, according to the letter of Moses, the law saith, not merely thou shalt *not hate*; but thou shalt *love*. Being benevolent and doing good, to the utmost of our capacity, is plainly enjoined; as well as every thing that is positively evil totally forbidden.

The law is likewise glorious in holiness, in its awful sanctions. It requires sinless perfection, as now explained, on no less severe a penalty than everlasting “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.” It says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” “The wages of sin,” without exception, according to law, “is death,”—the soul’s death, its eternal perdition.

Secondly, I am to show that this law is *just*, perfectly just; in all the strictness of its precepts, and in all the severity of its curse. These will require a distinct consideration. Both are disputed by the carnal mind.

To the justice of the preceptive part of the divine law, indeed, what can human reason object? May we not justly be required not to sin? Not to sin at all, in omission or commission?—The only objection is grounded on imbecility. ‘Were we able, doubtless we ought to keep ourselves from all sin, and might justly be so required. But this is by no means possible for the best of men. “There is not a just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not.” And certainly to require that of us which is not in our power, is palpably unjust.’

The objection seems strong, though built upon weakness. It is plausible, but it is not unanswerable. If the meaning be, that more is required of us than would be in our power were we of a perfect heart; I deny that, in this sense, any

thing in the commandments is above our capacity. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted," in all cases; God's perfect law always accepts it, "according to that a man hath." Where much is given, much is required; and where little, so much the less. Whether we have five talents, or two, or one, the perfect improvement of the talents we have, is all that is exacted. However weak our minds, or little our strength, to love the Lord our God with all our hearts—with all our *weak* minds and *little* strength, is the whole of the first commandment of the law. There is none other greater than this, or more difficult to obey. Did we thus love God, we should keep all his commandments; and none of them would be grievous.

But if it be meant, that we have not a "perfect heart and willing mind," and therefore sinless perfection cannot justly be required of us; what is this more or less than saying, We have not a disposition to do our whole duty, and therefore our whole duty cannot in justice be enjoined? What is it but saying, We have a great inclination to do iniquity, and therefore we ought to be allowed to do some iniquity, in all reason and righteousness? "Is the law sin," because we are sinners? Is that to be condemned because we are disposed to transgress; when it would be altogether unreasonable, had we only an inclination to obey!—If the divine law, in order to its being just, ought to be lowered at all, on account of the depravity of the hearts of men; for the same reason it must be brought down entirely to every man's heart, however depraved. or it will not be just. Let this objection be carried as far as it will necessarily go, if there be really anything in it, and it will come to this, that no law can be just, which requires any man to be or do, more or better, than exactly as he is disposed.

I am sensible that it is one of the hardest things in the world to beat this objection out of the heads and hearts of men: notwithstanding the stupidity of it is so exceedingly obvious. And no wonder; for as long as any man can wink hard enough not to see the absurdity of such a way of reasoning, from the painful reproaches of his own conscience, he is so far entirely free, and feels completely self-justified; whether an imperfect saint, or a most profligate abandoned sinner. But I believe it will be found at last that there is the same law, as a rule

of duty, for the one and for the other,—a law which alters not as men alter in degrees of moral depravity. And that according to this law, which requires the wickedest of all mankind to be perfectly righteous, every mouth will be stopped, and all the world, notwithstanding the present boasted plea of being sinful fallen creatures, be found guilty before God.—The only question is, which ought to be condemned, an imperfect creature, or a perfect law? The creature, because his heart is set in him to do that which is perfectly wrong; or the law, because it insists upon that which is perfectly right?

We are next to consider the justice of the penalty of God's holy law; and to show, that as he doth not lay upon man more than is right in its perfect requirements, so neither will he in the infliction of its awful threatenings.

Eternal death for every transgression and disobedience, is a dreadful punishment, indeed, and undoubtedly it seems to many, when they seriously think of it, excessively severe. 'Can every idle word, every evil thought, every unlawful wish, every deviation, in the smallest punctilio, from perfect righteousness, really deserve everlasting destruction? Can even any crimes, of a finite creature, committed in a momentary life, justly merit endless misery?'

To this it may be replied: The sins we commit, however little many of them may appear in other respects, are transgressions of the law of the great eternal God. In this the evil even of the grossest immoralities, as it were, wholly consists. Hence David, when he had been guilty of the atrocious crimes of adultery and murder, says, in his penitential confession to God, "Against thee, thee *only* have I sinned." And hence St. Paul speaks of sin as becoming, by "the commandment, exceeding sinful." If all the evil of sin consisted in the present injury done to creatures like ourselves, temporal death would be a punishment too great by far for most offences. Were there no God, or had God given us no law in any way whatever, and had our iniquities no respect to him, many of them would be truly very trivial. But "disobedience is as the sin of witchcraft." And the criminality of disobedience is ever supposed to be enhanced, in some proportion to the authority commanding, and the obligation we are under to

obey. Now the authority of God our Maker, and the obligations we are under to be obedient in all things to him, are absolutely infinite. Infinite, therefore, must be the sin of breaking his laws, and dishonouring him.

This is the common way of vindicating the justice of endless punishments. And certainly, known transgression of an express command of the infinitely great and glorious God, must be sinful beyond conception. But that every moral evil, in the most ignorant rational creature, so far partakes of this aggravation as to be a crime absolutely infinite, is a thing which cannot perhaps easily be "made manifest to all men."

I therefore desire that it may be seriously considered, whether the ill desert of sin, whatever may be its aggravations, be not of such a permanent nature, that it may justly be punished with the fire which never shall be quenched. It may be a question worthy of consideration, whether any crime, be it greater or less, will not deserve the same punishment for ever, that it deserves at first. Perhaps suffering pain can never take away blameworthiness on account of sin: and perhaps as long as blameworthiness remains, just desert of punishment must remain. Both these, I believe, are real truths, and that they would be felt as such by every man's conscience, could all misapprehensions be prevented.

That suffering doth not, in any measure, take away the blameworthiness of one who hath committed sin, may easily be perceived to be a plain dictate of common sense. After any criminal hath been punished as much as the laws of men require, is he ever thought to be at all less blameworthy than he was before? The *damage* which his crime has done, or had a tendency to do, to the public or to individuals, may be compensated or prevented by his punishment: but does any one suppose he is, for that reason, *blameless*, just as if he had never offended? Is he ever thought to be any freer from actual guilt, than if he had been permitted to escape with impunity? Has he less sin to repent of, or less reason to judge and condemn himself, because he has been imprisoned or scourged, or branded, according to law? The lash may change the Ethiopian's skin or the leopard's spots; but it can never make a criminal innocent. Nothing is more evident than this, that crimes are not to be obliterated and innocence

restored, by involuntary sufferings. Sin is ever so written with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond, as never to be effaced in regard to the ill desert, or blameworthiness of the sinner.

That as long as blameworthiness remains, just desert of punishment must remain, is what I apprehend would also appear a plain dictate of common sense, were it not for some confusion of thought arising from inadequate comparisons; or for confounding ideas which are really different. I know we are apt to think that when a culprit hath suffered a certain number of stripes for a crime, for that particular offence he deserves no more. But I suppose the only reasons why we think thus are, either because in that case we measure desert by the law of the land, which is the judge's rule beyond which he has no right to go: or else, because we measure desert by the supposed need there is of punishment. To punish beyond law, is wrong in a judge; it is illegal. To punish beyond necessity, is wrong in a legislator; it is unmerciful. But deserving punishment according to human laws, and deserving it in justice, are two things. Whether it would be necessary to punish, and whether it would be just, are also two things. In point of strict justice, abstractly from mercy, and from all idea of a limiting law, I think it must be a clear case that blameworthiness and punishment-worthiness, are ever exactly commensurate;—that just as much, and just as long, as blame is deserved, punishment is deserved. Till therefore the sinner can stand up before his eternal judge, and truly say, I have suffered so much or so long, that I am become perfectly innocent, and deserve not to be faulted at all; he cannot plead releasement from prison, and from all further pains and penalties, as a matter of absolute justice. But I believe a sinner may suffer to all eternity, before he will be able truly to say this, of whatever magnitude his sins may have been.

This way of accounting for endless punishments, is far from supposing that all sins are of equal demerit. It does not go upon the supposition that they all, nor any of them deserve infinite punishment. It only supposes that the ill desert of every sin is durable, unalterable, and everlasting. The degree of punishment, which men deserve, is in proportion to

the numbers and aggravations of their iniquities : but that degree of punishment, whatever it may be, they will deserve for ever. Little things may be as lasting as things that are great. The soul of man is not infinite, yet we suppose it will exist without end.

If neither of the foregoing solutions should satisfy ; there is yet another way of vindicating the sentence of eternal condemnation as perfectly just. It may be considered as a sentence of reprobation to endless sin, and to endless misery as the necessary consequence. Certainly it is a righteous thing in God to say, whenever he sees fit, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." The Most High is not under obligation in justice, to keep his creatures from falling into a state of sin and misery ; surely then we cannot suppose him under any such obligation to recover fallen creatures to holiness and happiness. Those finally left to themselves will for ever sin ; and for this they will deserve to be for ever vessels of wrath. Sin can never be innocent, or undeserving of punishment, by reason of the peculiar circumstances in which the sinner is placed. Being in a state of probation, and in a world of hope, is not certainly the only thing which renders impenitence, blasphemy, malice, or any kind of iniquity, culpable, and worthy of divine indignation. It is true we read that in the other world, every one shall receive according to the deeds done "in the body," whether good or bad. But this needs not be understood as implying that nothing shall ever be received for things done after this life is ended. It may only mean that all, by the sentence of the supreme Judge, will commence their fixed future existence in a degree of happiness, or misery, proportioned to their good or evil conduct in the present probationary state. There are ways, undoubtedly, in which the perfect justice of God's holy law in its penalty, as well as in its precepts, may be fairly and fully vindicated.

We proceed to the vindication of its perfect goodness. A good law is one that is necessary and well-adapted to answer good ends. However pure or equitable a law may be, yet if it be needless, and will do no good, it cannot well be called a good law. A law perfectly good, lays no duty on the subject, nor any penalty on the transgressors, however justly it might

be laid, but what is requisite for some important or beneficent purpose.

That the divine law, in the preceptive part of it, is thus perfectly good, may very easily be evinced. We may be sure that the commandments of God are perfectly good, because they require perfect goodness, and nothing but goodness. From those summaries of the moral law, which are given both in the Old Testament and in the New, and indeed from an attentive perusal of the whole book of the law, it is easy to see that the "law of kindness" comprehends the whole law of God; or that every duty enjoined in the law and the prophets will readily and necessarily flow from love to God and our neighbour. "Love is the fulfilling of the law;" and such a law must certainly be dictated by love. No laboured proof will be required to convince any man that a law is good which obliges all others to be perfectly benevolent and good to him: and will any one be so inconsistent as not to acknowledge that it must be likewise a good law, which commands *him* to be perfectly benevolent and good to *all others*?

Besides, it is easy to show, that all the duties enjoined upon us are necessary for our own good, as well as for the glory of God and the good of our fellow-creatures. We may truly say as Moses did, Deut. vi. 24, "The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, for our good always."

Is not this evidently the case in regard to the personal duties of sobriety and temperance? Certainly it would not have consisted with a perfect attention to our private temporal happiness, for God to have given us a law allowing us to live in luxury and excess, in gluttony and drunkenness. It is requisite for our worldly interest, for our bodily health, and for our best enjoyment even of the pleasures of sense, that we should deny ourselves those inordinate, sensual gratifications which are made unlawful in the word of God. Fleshly lusts war against the soul, and against the body too. To abstain from them as we are commanded, is necessary for the comfort of the life that now is, as well as in order to the happiness of that which is to come.

Is not this evidently the case in regard to the commands of righteousness and charity towards our neighbour? It is generally found to be most for the security and advancement

of a man's wealth and outward estate, and is always most for his real happiness, to do justly and love mercy; to provide things honest in the sight of all men, and to be as liberal as the divine law requires. All the commanded social affections are delightful affections; and all the forbidden unfriendly passions are painful passions. Had nothing been in view but only our own felicity, the feelings and duties of humanity could not have been enjoined otherwise than they are.

Is not this also evidently the case in regard to the duties of religion? the tempers and exercises commanded immediately toward God? Can anything be more essential to our highest happiness, than to remember our Creator, and trust in him? to fear and love the greatest and best of beings, and to worship him in spirit and in truth?

Every one who rightly understands the statutes of the Lord, and knows what it is to obey them in sincerity, can testify with David in the context; "more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." The ways of God's commandments are all ways of our truest wisdom. Not only will they be infinitely profitable in the end, but for the present they are ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace. How much more would good men find them to be so, if they observed them wholly, and with a perfect heart.

But perhaps it will be supposed, that the perfect goodness of the *curse* of the law, cannot so easily be made evident. I think, however, it may be shown beyond contradiction, that we have no reason to believe the contrary. Not only the threatening, but the actual infliction of eternal death, for transgression and disobedience, for any thing that we can tell, may be dictated by perfect goodness. Not goodness to the individuals who are made to suffer this awful penalty, to be sure. Their good is given up. But goodness to the universe. We know not what severity against sin is necessary, for all the important purposes of perfect government, in the vast dominion of God. That other ends are proposed by penal laws, and the execution of them, in all communities, besides the good of the punished, we well know. A regard to the

safety of society, to the support of government, and to the support of his own character, will influence a good earthly judge to condemn criminals of certain descriptions to perpetual imprisonment, or to death; notwithstanding the tenderest feelings of humanity towards the unhappy sufferers. The same reasons will influence a good legislator to enforce his salutary laws with such terrible sanctions, when he supposes nothing less severe would be sufficient. In like manner, it must unquestionably seem good in the sight of the Supreme Ruler, who is perfectly benevolent, to punish the transgressions of his infinitely important statutes with eternal death, if the support and display of his own holy character, and the greatest good of the creation, so require? And why should it be thought a thing incredible, that this should be the case? The characters of lawgivers and judges among men are important characters; and it is incumbent on those who sustain these characters, carefully to support them, by enacting just laws, and by judging righteous judgment. How much more important the character of the Supreme Legislator and Judge of all worlds? And how much greater the necessity of its being perfectly supported?

The declarative glory of God, as it concerns himself, is an end of inconceivable weight. It is the highest end that can possibly be promoted. It is also a matter of the utmost consequence to all the good part of the intellectual creation; to holy angels and just men. In His light they see light. In the light of his countenance—in the knowledge and contemplation of his perfections, is their supreme felicity. By the declarative glory of God is meant, the manifestation of his essential glory; the giving rational creatures true ideas of his real attributes. In order to this, it seems necessary that he should make himself known by his works and ways. This therefore is the method he hath taken, and which it is to be supposed, he will for ever pursue. By works of power he shows that he is omnipotent; by doing good, he shows that he is good; and by awful judgments on the workers of iniquity, he shows that he is, beyond comparison, “glorious in holiness.” It may reasonably be presumed, that, for the sake of his declarative glory, in which he so much delights, and which is so essential to the good of created intelligences,

it is necessary that these, his several perfections, should be thus eternally displayed. This seems to be the account which we have in the Scriptures, of the wise and good ends both of temporal and eternal punishments.

When Pharaoh was drowned in the Red sea, there was this good end to be answered by it, that God's name might be declared throughout all the earth. And the apostle says, "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" We are sufficiently let into the reasons and ends of the wrath to come, to have rational grounds to believe that the law which punishes sin with eternal death, on the larger and universal scale, is perfectly good. Certainly it must argue great arrogance, rather than superior penetration, in any man to be confident of the contrary. Who but one who knows how to govern the universe, in the wisest and best manner, can safely pretend to say, that endless punishments, though just, cannot be necessary, nor answer any sufficiently important purpose? But it is time we proceed to consider, as was proposed,

II. The subserviency of the perfect law of God, to the conversion of the souls of men.

There is such a thing as giving a new heart, or renewing a sinner in the spirit of his mind, which I conceive is by the supernatural power of the Holy Ghost; and in which the power of means can do nothing, more than in other supernatural works. But by converting the soul, I suppose, is here meant, correcting the errors of the understanding, and causing the heart actively to turn from evil and false ways, to the ways of truth and righteousness. This is by moral suasion, or by the moral power of the word; not indeed, independently of divine power, for thus no ordinary effects are produced. In this active conversion, this turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, I conceive the divine law has an essential instrumentality from first to last; and that it is as necessary for thus converting souls under the present dispensation of grace, as it was in the days of David.

It is by the law, that a sensible man will most likely be converted from *infidelity*. As long as men are ignorant of the law of perfection, or do not believe that they are under any such law, they will naturally, if rational and free thinkers, reject the grace of God which bringeth salvation. They see no need of it; and are therefore ready to look upon it as a cunningly, or rather, perhaps, a foolishly devised fable. But let them once be convinced, by sound reasoning, that they are bound by the law of nature, to sinless perfection; let them once see themselves shut up under perfect law, to the faith of Christ, as the only certain door of hope; and they will no longer make light of the Christian revelation, and discard it as a needless, trifling affair.

It is by the law that men must be converted from any gross *heresy*. All essential errors, respecting the doctrines and design of the gospel, begin in loose notions of the law; and the most effectual way to correct them, is by bringing men back to this original standard of right between God and man. Here the ideas are most plain and simple. Here the truth most readily commends itself to every man's conscience. And the law, rightly understood, is the only easy, the only possible key, to all the grace and truth which come by Jesus Christ. Had no learned doctors in divinity been without law, some other elaborate and very curious keys to the apostolic writings, would probably never have been invented. Viewing the law, as not requiring us to be any other than imperfect creatures, just such depraved creatures as we actually are, it is really necessary to have recourse to very subtle criticisms, and to dig deep for unknown Greek and Hebrew roots, in order to make the gospel at all consistent with our natural notions of *bare justice*. Whereas let the law be understood, as requiring sinless perfection, and that most justly, and the New Testament, in its obvious plain English, immediately opens to view, as full of glorious grace.

It is by the law that *orthodox* unbelievers are converted from *stupidity* and *self-righteousness*. How many are there in all our congregations who make light of a preached gospel, and pay little attention to it, though in speculative sentiments they are not infidels, nor gross heretics? They do not believe enough to make them tremble. They have no sense of their

sins. However much they may hear of the wrath of God, yet they inwardly say, "Because we are innocent, surely his anger shall turn from us. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes." The reason is, men have loose notions of the rule of right. They conceive nothing but imperfection can be expected or required of fallen creatures. Hence the man who has ever been what the world calls moral, supposes he hath kept all the commandments from his youth up; and is ready to say, "What lack I yet?" Such were the apprehensions of St. Paul before his conversion. "I was alive," says he, "without the law once." Without the knowledge of the law, and supposing all it did or could require, was only such obedience as is consistent with the moral depravity of fallen men, he imagined he had kept it very perfectly, and that he was justified by it, and in no danger of its curse. "But when the commandment came," says he, "sin revived, and I died." When he found that the law was as perfect as if we were not at all depraved; when he saw that it required him to be perfectly holy in heart and life, and most justly so required, "sin revived." It appeared alive in him, and in every thing that he did. All his supposed religious affections, and all his most specious moral duties, were seen to be full of sin. "And he died." He felt himself not only condemned, but spiritually dead; utterly unable to do anything but dead works, till quickened by renewing grace. Such knowledge of sin, and of ourselves, is by the law; and such knowledge of sin and of ourselves is necessary in order to a sound conversion. I may add,

It is by the law that the soul is actually converted, as well as brought to those convictions which are prerequisite. Saving conversion consists in repentance toward God and in faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ: and in effecting both these, the law of perfect righteousness is of great and necessary use.

Repentance toward God, is from a sight of the glorious holiness, justice and goodness of the divine law; and can never be produced by all the grace of the gospel, while the law is not thus seen. I am sensible it hath been common, and is still, to distinguish two kinds of repentance, by the names of *legal* and *evangelical* repentance; and to consider the former as hypocritical and false, the latter only as repentance unto sal-

vation. But perhaps, what might properly enough be called by either of these names may be true repentance; though as they have often been explained, I apprehend both are false. According to some, the former is the effect of fear; the latter the effect of hope; but neither of them the fruit of love, except self-love. The legal penitent is supposed to repent, because he is afraid he shall go to hell; the evangelical penitent because he hopes he shall go to heaven; but neither the one nor the other because he hates sin, or has any concern for the glory of God, ultimately considered. All Antinomians make their legal and their evangelical repentance equally selfish, and equally void of virtue; unless it be more virtuous to be actuated by mercenary hopes than by slavish fears. Many, it is true, who, in conformity to long established custom, make use of these distinguishing epithets, explain them in a manner that does not imply Antinomianism. By evangelical repentance they mean, that which implies sorrow for sin, and a hearty turning from it, because it is against God: by legal repentance, only being sorry for our sins, and purposing to forsake them, because they are seen to be of dangerous consequence to ourselves. I have no objection to this as a just account of *true* and *false* repentance; but the propriety of calling one *legal*, and the other *evangelical*, I do not readily comprehend. The difference in repentance, as being selfish or ingenuous, hypocritical or sincere, I conceive is not owing to the different representations of God and sin, in law and gospel; but to the different dispositions of the men to whose minds these representations are made. The man who has the pious feeling heart of the psalmist David, will repent truly, when he sees his sins in the light of God's holy law. The man who has the hard selfish heart of the traitor Judas, will not repent truly when he sees his sins in all the additional light reflected on them by the cross of Christ and the grace of the gospel. Before genuine repentance can be produced, by any means, the heart must be changed by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. When the law finds a soul thus prepared, it will work in it godly sorrow, and repentance not to be repented of. When the commandment comes, and is seen to be perfectly good, holy, and just, unless we have perfect hearts of stone, we shall abhor ourselves, and repent

in dust and ashes. When we think on our ways, and see how contrary they have been to the reasonable requisitions of our most rightful Sovereign, if we have the least spark of godly sensibility, we shall mourn and be in bitterness for the dishonour we have done to him; and not merely on account of the evils to which we have exposed ourselves. Apprehensions of the mercy of God in Christ will quicken and increase true repentance; but can never begin it, without a previous true discovery and cordial approbation of the divine law.

The other part of a sound and saving conversion, namely, faith toward Jesus Christ, is also in consequence of right views of the divine law, and cannot take place without them. "The law was our schoolmaster," says the apostle, "to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." The humiliating lessons concerning God's righteousness, and our own unrighteousness, which are taught in the school of the law, must be thoroughly learned and have their effect on the *heart*, in the first place; and then a sinner will be easily reconciled to the way of life and peace. To think of persuading men to embrace the gospel before ever they have understood and submitted to the law, is absurd and impossible. It is reading the book wrong end upward. It is beginning at the last end of the line.

Lastly, it is by the law of perfection that good men are made better. They are hereby turned still more and more from darkness to light, and from sin to holiness. By being converted, is not always meant in Scripture the first conversion of a sinner. Our Saviour said to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." The godly, when they have fallen into great sins, are recovered again by repentance; and in order to this a new law-work is necessary. Such a law-work David repeatedly experienced, long after he had been eminently pious, as appears by many passages in his psalms. In the 32d he says, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." And in the 38th. "For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my

sin." Nor is it only after grievous backslidings that good men feel the powerful influence of the holy law, converting their souls. They experience its humbling and sanctifying efficacy, turning them from the errors of their ways, in a gradual progression, all their lives. Through God's precepts they get understanding; therefore they hate every false way. "The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light." Hence, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

All that remains is the improvement, and in this there is time only for one or two particulars. We may hence infer,

First, The exceeding unreasonableness of imagining that the divine law is abated; or that Christ hath redeemed us, in any measure, from the moral law, as a rule of duty. What has been said, both of the perfection and the salutary use of this law, shows the extreme absurdity of such an imagination.

Can it be supposed that an all-perfect Being should, on any consideration, disannul a law which was, and always will be, holy, just, and good in perfection; and enact another not *so holy*, not *so just*, nor *so good*? Can it be supposed that the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and express image of his person, should come down from heaven, and bleed and die, to procure an alteration on an all-perfect law? an alteration which could not be for the better, but must be for the worse? It is true, Christ hath opened a glorious way for the gracious pardon and acceptance of penitent believers, though *very* imperfect. But certainly he hath not liberated, either believers or unbelievers, from the obligation they were under to observe and obey the original perfect law of his heavenly Father. At his first entrance on the execution of his prophetic mission, he gave a solemn caveat to the great congregation in which he preached righteousness, not to think that inculcating such licentious doctrine, or opening a door for it, was any part of his design. He assured the multitude, in his sermon on the mount, that to alter "one tittle" of the moral law, was as far from his intention, as it was a thing in itself utterly impossible.

Nor would sully the lustre, or lessening the purity and perfection of the divine law, at all have comported with the benevolent office he came to perform in favour of mankind.

He came to convert souls. He came to "save his people from their sins." He "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it might be holy and without blemish." But in order to all this, it was surely necessary that the law of perfect holiness should remain steadfast and unaltered. How could sinners be converted by a flexible law? a law which was itself converted to their depraved hearts and crooked ways! How could men be saved from their sins, or even have the knowledge of sin, by such a law? What end could be answered by giving to imperfect creatures an imperfect law; unless to keep them imperfect and to justify their imperfections? The notion of a fallen law for fallen men, must certainly be, not from the *Saviour*, but from the *adversary* of souls. It is one of the most capital devices of the god of this world, who was a murderer from the beginning. As long as he can blind the minds of them that believe not, with the imagination of such a divine law, he is sure of their souls. They will never be converted. The light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, cannot shine unto them.

Secondly, We hence infer, that *legal-preaching*, truly so called, ought not to be censured, and must by no means be omitted. Some would have the constant strain of the preacher what they call purely *evangelical*,—all faith and no works. To hear moral duties explained and inculcated, they do not like. It is not experimental. They are not fed. But such are as ill-affected to the real gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as to the holy law of God. Ministers may keep back nothing that is profitable; they must not shun to declare all the divine counsel, and surely they must not shun to declare the divine law, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. "This is a faithful saying," says the apostle to Titus, "and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men." They are profitable to the doers of them, as well as to their neighbours.

They are profitable not only in regard to the life that now is, but likewise in relation to that which is to come. The more good works men do on earth, the greater will be their reward in heaven: nor can they get to heaven at all without good works. "Know ye not," says St. Paul, "that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived." Preaching the law is certainly necessary, "for the perfecting of the saints," and for the detection of false professors. But it is also necessary for the conviction and conversion of sinners. Accordingly we find that the inspired preachers and writers of the New Testament insisted much on the law, in order to awaken attention to the gospel. John the Baptist did so, we may be sure; and he had wonderful success. Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, went out to him to be baptized, confessing their sins. James and John, who were surnamed Boanerges, that is, the sons of thunder, were doubtless great preachers of the law; and not merely loud and noisy preachers. Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; that is, he preached law rationally when Felix trembled. This was the common apostolic method. See 2 Cor. v. 11. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." And certainly, never was there a more perfect preacher of law, than the author and finisher of our faith.

It is true there is a kind of *legal preaching*, so called, which is justly censurable; and which tends not to the conversion or edification, but to the destruction of souls. Should we represent that all the duty which God requires of the unregenerate, is only abstaining from external immoralities, and attending upon the outward and ordinary means of grace, from such principles, and with such hearts, as they at present have; and that if they do these things, they need not fear failing of divine mercy; we should heal the heart of awakened sinners slightly: we should only assist them in going about to establish their own righteousness. Or should we teach that good men are under an abated law, which requires only such imperfect goodness as God hath given them, our doctrine would tend to make them feel, as far as they believed it, altogether self-justified; instead of leading them to see their

constant entire dependence on free grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

But such preaching to sinners or to saints, is not properly *legal* preaching. It is not properly preaching the law of *the Lord*, but a law of *our own*. It is making "the commandment of God of none effect by our tradition."

Preaching the divine law, as it really is, and as our Saviour and the apostles preached it, has no tendency to quiet the consciences of unbelievers, nor to make good men self-righteous, but quite the reverse. By this, "the loftiness of man is bowed down, and the haughtiness of men is made low, and the Lord alone is exalted." From the law of perfection, principally, are those "weapons of our warfare, which are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds: casting down imaginations, and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Let the law be truly preached, and divinely impressed, and sinners will see the necessity of fleeing to a better refuge than their own graceless duties. The best of men will also see that they "stand by faith," and will "not be high-minded, but fear." They will see that they must be "justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law." They will see that in point of justification, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." "Through the law they will be dead to the law," though more than ever engaged to "live unto God." The man of the greatest attainments in grace and holiness will not feel as if he "had already attained, either were already perfect; but this one thing he will do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, he will press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

END OF VOL. III.

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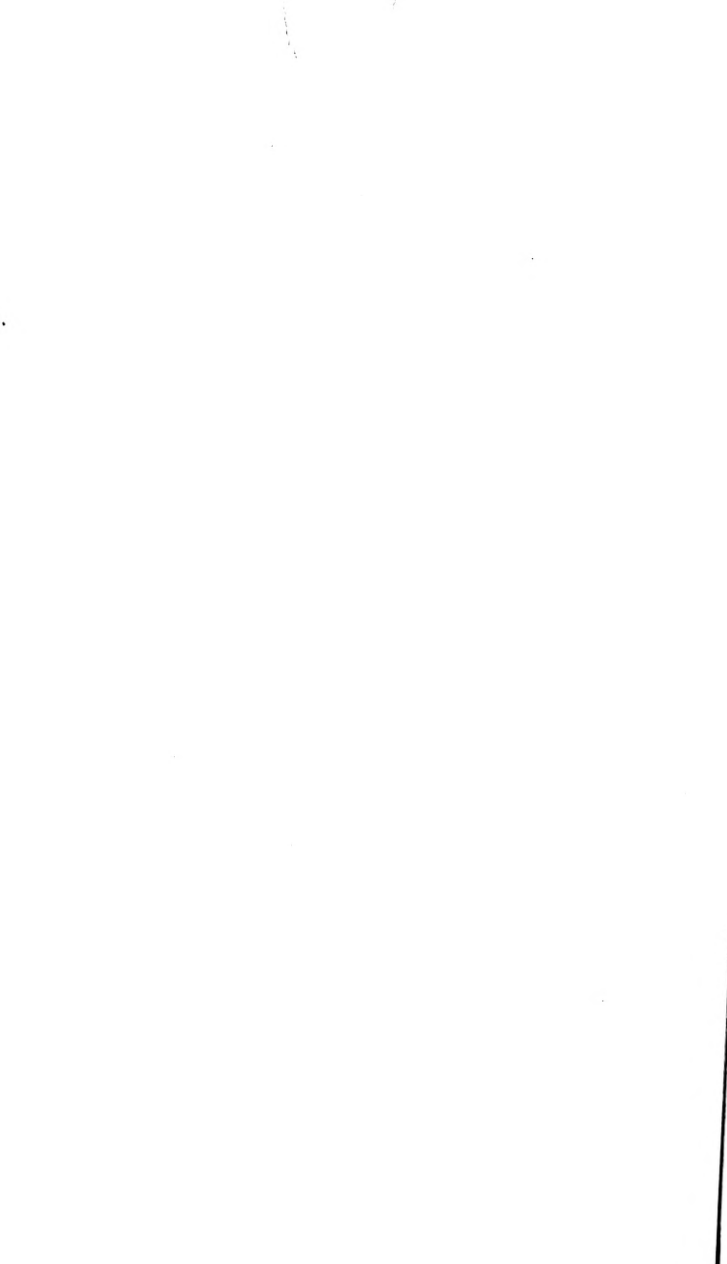
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